

# PIRITUAL



A Catholic  
Quarterly

# LIFE

Volume 5, No. 1

March, 1959

## "Come and see" — or Religious Experience

*E. I. Watkin*

*Father Martin, O.C.D.*

*John D. Zuercher, S.J.*

*G. Emmett Carter*

*Benoît du Moustier*

### **Plus:**

**The Real Theresa — A Criticism**

*Father Noel Dermot, O.C.D.*

15th ANNIVERSARY SPECIALS

## THE BOOK OF HOURS

Edited by the Benedictine  
Monks of Encalact Abbey

A magnificent simplified breviary that contains all of the Psalms, the complete liturgical year, readings from the Bible and the Fathers of the Church, and an up-to-date martyrology. Designed for individual recitation and for communities of sisters and brothers who want a solid liturgical formation and rich spiritual food. Over 1,800 pages. Handsome leather binding.

\$15

## JOURNEY TO BETHLEHEM

By Dorothy Dohen, former  
editor of *Integrity*

Sensitive and beautiful reflections on the themes of penance, suffering, sacrifice and love by a woman whose warm and perceptive writings have made her one of the most talked about of the younger Catholic authors. Practical, everyday spirituality.

\$2.50

AT ALL BOOKSTORES

**FIDES  
PUBLISHERS**

Chicago 19

v. 5  
1959

Associate Editors:

FR. DENIS, O.C.D.

FR. PETER THOMAS, O.C.D.

FR. MICHAEL, O.C.D.

Business Manager:

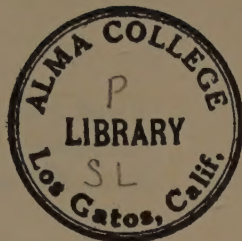
FR. EDWARD, O.C.D.

# SPIRITUAL LIFE

A Catholic Quarterly

EDITED BY THE DISCALCED CARMELITE FATHERS

FATHER WILLIAM OF THE INFANT JESUS, O.C.D., Editor



---

VOLUME 5	MARCH, 1959	No. 1
----------	-------------	-------

---

## Contents


Editorial . . . . .	2
Mysticism, by E. I. Watkin . . . . .	6
Why Mysticism?, by Father Martin, O.C.D. . . . .	22
Cultivating Contemplation in Action, by John D. Zuercher, S.J. . . . .	28
English Mysticism in the Life of St. Thomas More, by Benoît du Moustier . . . . .	36
Education for Contemplation, by Very Rev. G. Emmett Carter . . . . .	43
The Real St. Thérèse, by Father Noel Dermot, O.C.D. . . . .	49
Book Reviews . . . . .	69

---

SPIRITUAL LIFE is a quarterly published in March, June, September, and December. Copyright, 1959, by the Discalced Carmelite Fathers of the Province of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. *Subscription Information:* Subscription price in the United States, U. S. possessions, and Canada, one year, \$3.00; two years, \$5.00. In all foreign countries, one year, \$3.50; two years, \$6.00. Single copies, \$1.00. Changes of address should include old as well as new address. Published by The Bruce Publishing Company, 400 N. Broadway, Milwaukee 1, Wisconsin. Second-class mailing privilege authorized at Milwaukee, Wisconsin. *Editorial Contributions:* should be sent to the Editor, 1233 So. 45 St., Milwaukee 14, Wis.

52240





# Editorial

A MYSTIC is one who knows God by experience. All of the apostles were mystics. John, the beloved disciple, opens up his first epistle with a clear, outspoken admission of this fundamental fact.

"We proclaim what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our own eyes, what we have gazed upon, and what we have embraced with our own hands. I refer to the Word who is and who imparts life. Indeed, this Life has manifested Himself. We ourselves have seen and testify and proclaim that the Eternal Life which was with the Father and has manifested Himself. To you we proclaim what we have seen and heard, that you may share our treasure with us. That treasure is union with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. I write this to you that we may have joy in the fullest measure."

John, the beloved disciple, has given his witness. What he once touched and tasted, and handled, that he has declared unto us. It was the shining, the epiphany of God the Father which he and the twelve had discovered tabernacled close at their side in the body of Christ. "We saw His glory, the glory as of God Himself."

The disciple's first encounter was the day he saw Jesus coming toward him and a wonderful word broke from the Baptist: "Behold the Lamb of God." The words fascinated, haunted him, and when on the following day, John uttered them again, two of them at least could not rest; their hearts burned to know more.

So two of them, and John the beloved who tells the story, followed Him. Now that He, the stranger, found them following, He turned and spoke. For the first time then He looked upon them with that look which again and again had the power to draw a soul by one glance, out of the night of sin into the life of eternal light. And so they heard His voice — that voice which by its cry could

raise the dead. "Whom seek ye?" That was all. And they hardly knew what to say — only they must see Him, must go with Him; and they stammered: "Rabbi, where dwellest thou?" And He said: "*Come and see.*"

They went and saw. So intense is the apostle's memory of that personal encounter that he can never forget the very hour of the day. It was just ten o'clock when he got to the house. They stayed with Him long enough to know, by experience, who He was.

This religious experience of the apostles is a basic, simple form of what we call mysticism. The typical mystic is the person who has a certain firsthand experience and knowledge of God through love. This is quite different from knowledge by hearsay or cold, detached study. It is what breathes eternal life into the latter forms of abstract knowledge. "And this is eternal life that you may know God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent."

We are prone in our thinking to limit the modes of God's action in souls to familiar forms known to us; hence we tend to restrict unduly the number of contemplatives. There is a different form not only for each great saint, but for each person, even the most ordinary.

This experience of God may come in many ways and under many symbolic disguises. It may be steady, or fleeting, dim or intense. But insofar as it is direct and intuitive it is always a mystical experience.

Experience is a difficult term to tie down with the threads of definition or description. The word which seems to get closest to the heart of things is *awareness*: the subjective reaction to some objective reality which is perceived in some way by the subject. This awareness can be conscious and unconscious; and that is what makes the difference between a saint who is a mystic and one who isn't; but the awareness of God possessed in common by *both* is in each case genuinely, essentially mystical. (Mr. Watkin explains this thoroughly in his article.)

This awareness is not simply an intellectual recognition of some object of thought but an awareness in which the whole man is engaged (involving and causing, normally, some sensation). It is a body-soul reaction to a mystical reality, namely, the divine encounter with man. It has nothing to do with emotional feelings



except insofar as the spiritual reaction of mind and will has some subsequent effect on the emotions.

The point is made succinctly by Jacques Maritain: "The phrase *mystical experience* I take . . . not in the more or less vague sense (applicable to all kinds of facts more or less mysterious or preternatural or even to simple religiosity) but in the sense of an experimental knowledge of the depths of God, or of the suffering of divine things, leading the soul, by a series of states and transformations to the point of realizing in the depths of self the touch of the deity."

Sacred History is the history of religious experience: God intervening in human affairs, revealing Himself, inviting and readying man to reach the pinnacle of all human experiences — the personal encounter with the living God. The cosmic and Mosaic revelation represents nothing more than a stage in mankind's advance in the knowledge of the true God. It is only in Jesus Christ that the hidden God is truly revealed: "No man has seen God at any time: the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him." God has expressed His fullness in the Word.

The Incarnation is the high point of religious experience: the divine-human encounter. And the Church is the prolongation of the Incarnation. The code and cult of the Church are meaningless apart from religious experience. They are either conceptual interpretations of religious experience (doctrine) or the external, physical, cultural embodiments of religious experience (liturgy). Whatever is unrelated to this spiritual center is ecclesiastical materialism. In the light of this it seems that what is defective about our religious revival today is that most of us are spending all of our time and energy running around the circumference, and taking for granted the center which is religious experience.

We have shied away from the term "religious experience" ever since the Protestant revolution with its false and disastrous forms of "experiencing." Shall we discard religious experience because we have read or heard about neuropathic perversions or concomitants of religious experience? Do we condemn sex because we know of morbidities, hysteria, and perversions which abound in the sexual sphere? We think it is unreasonable to reject religious experience as subjective illusion, when in power, satisfaction and delight, and in

its value, intellectual and spiritual, it incalculably exceeds any other form of human experience.

What, then, is *mystical theology*? It is the theology of the fullness of the Christian life lived in union with Christ and the total Christ of the Church, and lived in such a way that it is experienced as well as understood. Mystical theology then is bound up with what has been called by the Apostles and early Fathers "the mystery" — the living mystery of Christ-on-earth being born, living, redeeming the times, and dying day by day and rising again in the life of Christians. "No longer I but Christ lives in me."

Any deep spiritual life is a mystical life. If we define *mystical life* as that in which the direct action of God through the gifts of the Holy Spirit is predominant, we cannot conceive the possibility of living the spiritual life in any other way.

Extraordinary favors and thrilling experiences are not part of the mystical life. The life of St. Therese and even of Jesus and Mary and Joseph is the living illustration and affirmation that the highest mystical life may be (and often is) without any appearance of mystical phenomena.

Mysticism is the passionate longing of the soul for God, the Unseen Reality, loved, sought, and adored in Himself and for Himself alone. A mystic is not a person who engages in unusual forms of prayer, but a person whose life is ruled by this thirst. He feels and responds to the overwhelming attraction of God, is sensitive to that attraction. He need not be a great religious personality, but he must be a servant of the Word. In other words, he may not vibrate to the presence of Christ, but he can know and cleave to Him nevertheless.

The last issue of SPIRITUAL LIFE was about Christian Humanism. This issue is about Mysticism — the perfect expression of Humanism: man becomes perfectly human when he is partly divine.

FATHER WILLIAM, O.C.D.



*We know of no one who can treat of the theme of this issue of SPIRITUAL LIFE more searchingly and satisfactorily than Mr. Watkin, renowned English author.*

## Mysticism

E. I. Watkin

WE LIVE in an age when the rate of change is too rapid for our health. Could a man have fallen asleep forty, even thirty, years ago and awake today he would in many respects be a Rip Van Winkle returned to a strange new world. We cannot adjust ourselves to a pace so breathtaking. And it is accentuated by the amazing acceleration of actual movement of which no end is in sight. Moreover, the change has produced an insecurity not only of the environment and way of living to which we have become accustomed and attached but the increasing insecurity of a destructive power undreamed of only a few years ago and already so far advanced that atomic warfare threatens the wholesale annihilation of entire cities, and the health and life even of those living far from the devastated area. And at the same time intellectual and moral certainties accepted universally are being called in question.

In the midst of this flux, uncertainty, and insecurity, Catholics have firm anchorage in a faith substantially immutable, in a Church securing and safeguarding that faith throughout the changing centuries. It is not however always easy to keep a firm hold on what can plausibly be represented as a survival of a view of the world discredited by modern scientific knowledge, the more plausibly inasmuch as a re-expression in terms of contemporary thought and knowledge must be, and is in fact being carried out, such as was the work of re-expression performed in the thirteenth century by the schoolmen when the Aristotelian philosophy made its impact upon Western Europe.



If then we are to resist successfully the constant pressure of a hostile environment powerfully equipped with the theoretical and practical achievements of science we must penetrate below in these things of the spirit. We must go deeper than a merely superficial and customary Catholicism and achieve a contemplative Catholic Christianity. We should, that is to say, perceive the truths of Catholic faith as living realities of inexhaustible significance and power. Christ's Birth, Passion, and Resurrection, for example, must not be seen as merely historical events of the past, though of course they are such, but as present facts continued and operative in the lives of His members in whom He is born, dies, and rises again as they are born into this divine-human life, die to their old merely natural and human selves, rise from this death to share the triumphant glory of His risen and ascended life.

As the German mystic poet and convert, Angelus Silesius, says: "Were Christ born a thousand times over in Bethlehem but not in thee, thou art lost eternally" and again: "The cross on Golgotha cannot redeem thee from the evil one unless it is also set up within thyself."

### Mysticism: Union With God Experienced

It is in fact at this point that mysticism becomes, not just knowledge of some extraordinary religious phenomena without practical relevance to the life of the ordinary Christian, but a vital reality closely attached to the essence of the religious, the Christian, the Catholic life. For mysticism in its central and essential significance is experience of union with God, the union which is charity, sanctifying grace, the indwelling of the Spirit, participation in the mysteries of Christ, the reception of God's own life by the soul.

This view of mystical experience is taught by the late Abbot Chapman, among other writers, in those spiritual letters recently reprinted which, though I cannot in all points agree with the writer, are the work of a master of the spiritual life and mystical contemplation. Writing to a contemplative, a mystic, he says: "It seems to me that the perception you have is *not* of some new *kind* of union, which others have not got, but precisely a perception of the *union by grace* which all *justificati* (souls in the state of grace)

possess. Of course the perception leads to a greater degree of union; but there is nothing new in kind."<sup>1</sup>

This union however is not *directly and immediately* union with our Lord's Sacred Humanity but with the incomprehensible Godhead beyond the range of any image or concept. St. Gregory the Great says, "Then do we truly know God when we are fully aware that we cannot know anything about Him." The mystical union, that is to say, penetrates in, through, and beyond the mysteries of God's Incarnation to the God who became incarnate. There is, so to speak, a union of two beyonds, between the human spirit at a depth or height *beyond* its normal conscious activities and God beyond anything we can imagine or conceive.

The mystics speak of a center, base (*fundus*), or summit (*apex*) of the spirit, or its fine point. These spatial metaphors, of course, amount to the same thing. It is the source alike of reason, memory, and will. It is however predominantly a radical will. If we regard the soul as a spiritual energy — in a universe where all creatures are energies — this center or apex must be conceived as a volitional force from which acts of will proceed, as it were flames shooting out from a central fire.

This center, say the mystics, possesses a quasi-infinity inasmuch as it is capable of receiving God, the capacity for God — *homo capax Dei* — which God alone can fill and which produces that restlessness of the human heart of which St. Augustine speaks in his famous words.

When the spirit is thus filled and satisfied by God, the purpose of the Incarnation, indeed the Incarnation itself, is fulfilled, as the Preface for the feast of the Ascension declares. Jesus "was taken up into heaven that He might make us share His Godhead."

In virtue of this capacity, this infinite desire, God is, even naturally, present in a peculiar fashion to this central self, this radical will. But it is by grace that He satisfies the spirit's craving with a supernatural union whereby the spirit receives His own divine life, His knowledge of Himself, His love of Himself until after death this process of deification is complete in the Beatific Vision.

<sup>1</sup> *The Spiritual Letters of Dom John Chapman* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1935), p. 236.



We can therefore conclude that the sum and substance of supernatural religion is this progressive union with God and reception of Him. It is of this union that, as I have already suggested in company with Abbot Chapman and others, mystical prayer — also termed infused contemplation — is primarily the experience.<sup>2</sup> This experience occurs when the union, normally subconscious, hidden in the depths of the soul, rises to the conscious surface.

### Psychophysical Factors

I cannot refrain at this point from taking a further step not always taken by those who, like myself, see mystical experience as experience of the union of charity. Whether I am justified in doing so it is for you to consider. I suggest that the supernatural operation of divine grace is simply and solely the union of wills which is charity. The experience of it on the other hand is the natural psychological effect of this union when it has attained a particular degree of intensity of intimacy. Moreover, this emergence into consciousness of the will in union with God is conditioned by the psychophysical temperament of the subject. Some persons are comparatively transparent, others opaque. The former are such that what passes in the spiritual depths, therefore in the center or apex of which we are speaking, comes more or less easily to the conscious surface, the latter are such that what passes in the depths does not come to the conscious surface, or, if it does, only when it is extremely intense. Transparent personalities, psychical sensitivities, are liable to telepathic and clairvoyant experiences or to perceive the so-far inexplicable psychic phenomena — ghostly sounds, movements, or apparitions. And they are often disposed to translate subconsciously a spiritual experience or contact into visual or auditory images, into visions and words.

A transparent person is conscious of his union with God, when an opaque person, whose union is equal to his or greater is unconscious of it. The former possesses mystical *experience*, the latter does not. But the latter is equally holy or holier. Indeed a person of transparent temper may be conscious of God's *natural* presence in

<sup>2</sup> I say "primarily," for as we shall see, there is a secondary form of mystical experience of a different kind.

the central spirit as Perfect Being, infinitely more real and more powerful than created being, the foundation and source of the creature's being. Yet there may be no *supernatural* union with God. Though I would not for a moment suggest that Tennyson, for example, was not in the state of grace, his overwhelmingly powerful experiences of the Divine Reality as recorded in *In Memoriam* and elsewhere had so little effect in producing even an earnest endeavor after sanctity that it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that they were experiences of God's natural presence in the soul and in the world by an exceptionally transparent subject.

The action of certain drugs increases transparency. If, therefore, a man possessing subconsciously the union of charity should take such a drug inculpably for medicine or as an anaesthetic, the induced transparency *might* make him conscious of that union, make him for the moment a mystic. And even drug-taking, so culpable as to destroy the union of grace, could make the subject aware of that *natural* presence of God in the central spirit which persists even in the wicked. The objection therefore which is sometimes brought against the objective reference of the mystic's experience, that something very like it is sometimes the product of a drug, is invalid. Aldous Huxley's experiments with mescaline are, I believe, a device to produce transparency and therefore to bring to the surface of consciousness what is already present subconsciously. But a drug cannot produce or otherwise affect union with God.

It is, I think, at least probable that the highest and closest union possible in this life, the transforming union, cannot be wholly unperceived even by the most opaque subject. But he will not be aware of it to the degree to which St. John of the Cross, for example, or St. Teresa was aware of it. His consciousness of union may be no greater than a transparent's consciousness of a union far less intense and intimate. It would seem probable, for example, that St. Augustine enjoyed no experience of God higher than what is termed full union or, perhaps, ecstasy. We are not however justified in concluding that he did not *possess* the higher union of which St. John of the Cross was aware and which he described as the transforming union, though, if he did, his *awareness* was far less. In this case, however, the comparative opacity was not, I believe,



temperamental or psychophysical, but the effect of the extroverted life of pastoral activity and theological polemics which it was his duty to accept but which interfered with his contemplation. St. Gregory the Great, on assuming the duties of a Pope, experienced and lamented the loss of contemplative *experience* — but *not* surely of union.

### Conscious Experience, as Such, Is Important, Normal, but Not Necessary

My hypothesis, if true, solves a problem which Abbot Chapman gave up as insoluble. "There is," he wrote, "a further question which no one seems able to decide. Is the mystic way the only road to perfection? . . . Is it possible to arrive at the same point the other way round, namely by mortification and meditation? Or is there a veiled mystic way by which certain holy people reach the transforming union without ever knowing that they are mystics? I don't see how any attempted philosophy of the subject can avoid answering these questions. I can't."<sup>3</sup> I have been suggesting an answer — the Abbot's final suggestion — that they may be able, if opaque, to reach the transforming union without knowing that they possess it.

If mystical *experience* is but a natural awareness, psychophysically conditioned, of the will's supernatural union with God, it is evident, that, as St. Teresa insisted most emphatically, it is *not* the only road to perfection. It is not, on the other hand, something extraneous to the way of perfection or even abnormal, as are visions or private revelation. For it is precisely awareness of the union which itself is the road to perfection. That is to say, it is the contemplative accident of a unitive substance. And it assists the soul most powerfully in the progress of union. Experience of God's presence as the cause, ground, and object of our prayer union must, *ceteris paribus*, increase our love and desire of Him, therefore our union with Him. *Even so the experience receives its value from the union experienced.* Mystical prayer, that is to say, is valuable in reference to the essential union of charity and inasmuch as it fosters it.

<sup>3</sup> Chapman, *op. cit.*, p. 277.

### Heart of Prayer

We are now in a position to appreciate and accept Abbot Chapman's practical teaching about prayer. "We have to make sure," he writes, "that the highest part of our soul (or the deepest if you prefer this metaphor) . . . is united to God . . . and nothing else matters at all in this world. The right intention is the only way I can describe it. The essential interior act of religion is the giving of ourselves to God, turning to Him and remaining turned, uniting ourselves to His will and renewing this union as often as we think of it or simply remaining united. When this essential act is going on in the point of the soul, all the rest of the soul can be in a disturbance, unrest, rebellion, misery. It does not matter. On the contrary, the point of the soul [the center, apex] accepts it, embraces it, wills it. Our advance in the practice of spirituality is the gradual increase of the habit of living in the spirit . . . that is identifying our real self with the 'point of the soul' not with all the emotions and imaginations which trouble us. The real 'I' is that which gives itself to God."<sup>4</sup> For a spirit, I hold, is a spiritual energy, a volition. "*Nihil aliud sumus nisi voluntates*" — "We are nothing but wills."

But let Abbot Chapman continue: "We want to use our will to want God. . . . We want to be wanting God and detached from everything else. . . . While our will is making its intense (but almost imperceptible) act of love, our imagination is running about by itself . . . so that we *seem* to be full of distractions and not praying at all. But this is the contrary of the fact. The distractions which are so vivid to us are not voluntary actions and have no importance, whereas the *voluntary* action we are performing is the wanting God or giving ourselves to God. . . . The real prayer is the act of the will."<sup>5</sup>

### Mystery of Prayer

God however is utterly incomprehensible. "What," writes Abbot Chapman, "do I mean by saying I want God and nothing else? I don't mean anything. What do I mean by God? I have no idea."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 174-175.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.



Therefore to want or more accurately to will God is to will nothing conceivable. When this will becomes powerful as at the entrance into mystical prayer, a state technically termed the night of the senses, "the act of wanting God" to quote Abbot Chapman once more "is an idiotic state and feels like the completest *waste of time*. . . . The strangest phenomenon is when we begin to wonder whether we mean anything at all and if we are addressing anyone or merely repeating mechanically a formula we do not mean. The word *God* seems to mean nothing. If we feel this curious and paradoxical condition we are starting on the right road. . . . With some people there is no knowledge of God or of His nearness, only a blind certainty that He knows our want. . . . But others have a vague undefinable knowledge that God is there. . . . It grows more and more definite and yet remains just as indefinite. That is to say the soul becomes more and more definitely conscious of being in the presence of something undefinable yet above all things desirable, without any the more arriving at than being able to think about it or speak about it, more and more conscious of its own nothingness before God without knowing how."<sup>7</sup>

The spirit, that is to say, is like a magnet pointing to the magnetic pole. Whatever passes in the inferior psychical strata, above these fluctuations the central self points to its pole, God, and if deflected from that direction, returns to it immediately.

Well then may Abbot Chapman say that the spiritual life, the life of genuine prayer is simple, however complicated and shifting interior states of mind or emotions may be.

That the will, therefore, the central spirit, has in fact made contact with God is shown, Chapman tells us, *when mystical experience is wanting* by a *fundamental* satisfaction, however dissatisfied the soul may feel on the surface, and by *strength* to do God's will in practice. It is like a man who has eaten nourishing food and is aware of the good effects. The eye cannot look on the sun at noon. Yet it sees the objects of its vision only in its light. Similarly, the human spirit cannot behold God for the excess of His glory "the light inaccessible" in which He dwells. But the splendor which blinds the spiritual eye illuminates whatever it sees, the mysteries, above all, of His Incarnation. Seen in the light of unitive prayer,

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 290-291.

even when that prayer, that light, is experienced as sheer darkness, the spirit is aware of a concrete reality, a life, a power to convince and illuminate in mysteries which otherwise could have obtained a merely notional assent. And in a world for which the fundamental concepts and values of Christian faith, sin, redemption, grace, sacrifice, the sacramental principle have become meaningless the Catholic cannot retain indefinitely a notional assent. No merely catechetical knowledge can sustain the pressure of an alien environment. Unitive prayer alone, because it is a union of the central self with the God who reveals Himself in the Christian mysteries, can give us the concrete and vital, in short the existential, knowledge of them which is real assent.

### *Only One Way to God — And It Is Mystical*

Because all are called to charity, to the supernatural union with God and reception of His gift of Himself, all and in particular all Catholic Christians are called, *not* certainly to *experience*, consciousness of union which is mystical prayer, but to the unitive prayer itself which is the substance alike of the mystical way and of Christian prayer. Here surely there is nothing esoteric, nothing confined to persons of transparent temper and contemplative disposition — helpful though these qualities are — but the one and only way to God.

I am however convinced that the principles so admirably stated by Abbot Chapman permit, or rather require, somewhat different application than he gives them.

I do not believe, as he appears to believe, that meditation is *necessarily* and *always* followed by a prayer of dryness or distraction — though it *very often is*. There may be the affective prayer practiced by Augustine Baker's disciple, Dom Gertrude More, in which the soul is drawn to acts of love sensibly felt, the activity of a more superficial psychical level than the adherence of the central will. And there is the prayer described by St. Francis de Sales, accepted in one letter by Abbot Chapman, but in another letter strangely pronounced impossible, in which the soul contemplates lovingly a mystery of faith — for example while saying the Rosary. But through, beyond, above both there is the central

adherence of the radical will, the magnet pointing to the pole. Vocal prayer, above all the communal prayer of the liturgy, may be said with conscious attention as it provides material for the ejaculatory prayers. Dom Augustine Baker called forced acts or, at a higher stage, aspirations divinely inspired. Baker collected a store of examples, though unfortunately not from the liturgy. That vocal prayer can become a vehicle of unitive prayer is admitted in principle by Baker and is proved by the fact that psalmody was the staple prayer of the desert fathers. The prince of mystics, St. John of the Cross, prepared for death not by a wordless and thoughtless contemplation but by saying the seven Penitential Psalms.

Unlike forced acts, the aspirations moved by God, whatever their vocal and conceptual clothing, belong as Baker and the *Cloud of Unknowing* teach, to the substance of unitive and mystical prayer. They are infused active contemplation. They cannot therefore be, as Abbot Chapman held, a mere occupation of the inferior faculties whose sole use is to prevent imagination or thought from interfering with the central act of adherence to God; but inspired by God, they are operations of that act.

### *Variety in Mystical Prayer*

To sum up what has been said: The magnetic direction of the central self toward God which is the substance of unitive prayer can be and is accompanied by many varieties of prayer made by the interior soul, not only as it advances by the aridity and darkness of a night of sense, but by vocal prayer, meditation, even forced acts of the will, acts of affection, contemplation of the Christian mysteries; and that the central prayer itself may provoke aspirations of the will toward God and determine their character. Whereas Abbot Chapman held that the central volition is normally expressed by one act constantly repeated, according to Baker there is an incalculable variety of such acts. And he also speaks from experience. There may, it seems, be one act or many, one aspiration or many, or just a simple loving gaze of the soul toward God. Another English master of prayer, the late Father Steuart, a Jesuit, describes this fashion of prayer. "It is," he writes, "a simple aware-



ness of God. It is a prayer in which the immensity, the majesty of God become so obvious that no words or actions are called for. . . . When there is silence in the soul a nameless communication between our souls and God takes place. It is not that God says anything. His communication is just His Being. This prayer means putting oneself in the presence of God and holding oneself there. The prayer of loving attention is not saying or doing but being. 'Be still and know that I am God.' When the fine point of the spirit (the magnet) is directed to God, detachment inevitably follows. Don't worry about your aridity. It is the means of a closer access to God, not a hindrance to it, because it is not by the use of our minds or affections that we can get close to Him but through His own action which *cannot work* except through our pure and unsupported faith, expressing itself in a sheer act of will." I am not, I confess, very clear as to the exact relationships between this prayer of loving attention as Father Steuart describes it and the distracted prayer of the Night of Sense as described by Abbot Chapman. Indeed it is not easy in Father Steuart's account to reconcile "aridity" with a powerful awareness of God's immensity and majesty. I am inclined to conclude that the two kinds of prayer in fact overlap and that no clear line of demarcation is possible. Moreover I suggest that in its most forcefully conscious form this prayer of simple attention passes into the Prayer of Quiet.

On the other hand, since it is only by suffering freely accepted that the spirit can be purged of the self-will, the self-affirmation which is the obstacle preventing complete surrender to the will of God, sooner or later prayer will become, I believe, dry, dark, and painful. But this will not necessarily happen because, or when, meditation is no longer a possible form of prayer.

### *The Essential Thing Is Undisputed and Easily Practiced*

What, however, I should wish to emphasize is that, although questions of mystical theology are more variously answered than in any other branch of theology, this divergence of opinion presents no practical difficulty to those who may desire to practice unitive prayer. For it is concerned with the experimental aspect of this prayer which is not in our own power but is God's gift,

whether, as is generally held, a supernatural or, as I have been led to believe, a natural gift, the gift of a transparent disposition or a favorable environment. The substance of unitive prayer, the union with God, though an operation of the sanctifying grace, which unites us to God, requires the free co-operation of our will. And this is the rule and order of Christian perfection — the way of salvation. When, if ever, and in what form the union is experienced, the experience — misleadingly called infused contemplation, for what, I suggest, is *infused* is the *union* not the *experience* of it — does not touch the root of the matter: the radical will surrendered to God and to the extent of that surrender, receiving Him.

### Stages of Prayer

Since the time of St. Teresa a succession of mystical states of prayer has been taught by mystical theology. There is the Prayer of Quiet in which the spirit apprehends and enjoys the presence of God as the object-subject of its will, though thoughts and emotions wander freely. As I have said earlier, I am very doubtful whether it is possible to distinguish clearly between the prayer of simple attention: the arid prayer of the Night of Sense and this Prayer of Quiet. The three would appear to blend and overlap. Moreover, as the questionnaire conducted by Dom Thomas Verner Moore (*The Life of Man with God*) has established, sporadic and transient touches of the Prayer of Quiet may be experienced even by novices in the spiritual life. The Prayer of Quiet, in turn, passes into the state of Full Union in which God's presence is experienced so powerfully and the union is so close that the entire soul is concentrated in her experience of God. This in turn may pass into ecstasy when the experienced union is so powerful that normal consciousness fails. A more radical purification of self in the Night of Spirit enables the soul to receive the final and highest union possible on earth the transforming union or mystical marriage in which the center of the soul is consciously and continuously occupied by God, and this habitual occupation from time to time makes self experienced as an invasion of the understanding now made the receptacle of God's self-knowledge, and the will, now made a receptacle of His self-love. Nevertheless the knowledge is but God's

knowledge of Himself only as existence, the supreme reality; not His knowledge of His nature. Faith is never superseded by sight.

The higher states of *experienced* union are so rare that their value for us is not that of a goal to be reached, but their witness to God as supreme Reality and the satisfaction of human desire. They make it easier to believe and up to a point understand our destinies beyond the grave.

### Active and Passive

Though he never says it in *so many words*, I am convinced that this entire way of progressive union from first to last is regarded by Father Baker as active infused contemplation, a progressive union of the central will and awareness of it. For he describes as active union a state of prayer so exalted, a union so intimate that while it lasts the subject is not even conscious of his distinction from God.

There is however a secondary type of mystical prayer which is not an awareness of the soul's union with God but an infusion or at least an arrangement by God of concepts and/or images. This is passive infused contemplation as contrasted with active. It is, I think, called passive because, whereas the active prayer can be refused by the subject and he co-operates with the Divine Motion of his will, he *cannot* exclude the images and concepts of passive prayer. It is thus a secondary type of mystical experience as contrasted with the type which alone any soul may desire, pray for, or hope to receive.

We may, as Baker teaches in his "Commentary" upon the *Clouds of Unknowing*, contemplate God "by species or images infused by God into our souls or by images that already are therein which He maketh in some manner to represent Himself to the soul. And this is done in the passive union . . . or else the soul contemplates God with the light of faith only," conscious aspirations to union with God, or awareness of it "as they do that pursue the exercises of the will that is treated of throughout this book called the *Cloud*."<sup>a</sup>

It seems probable that in the concrete the higher degrees of

<sup>a</sup> *Cloud of Unknowing*, with a commentary by Father Augustine Baker, O.S.B., edited by Dom Justin McCann, O.S.B. (6 ed.), p. 161.



conscious active union — from ecstasy onward — always are accompanied and invested by some form of passive prayer. At any rate, this seems to be normal. In the abstract, however, the two are distinct kinds of mystical prayer.

This passive prayer, Baker teaches, and he had experience of it, is far more potent than the awareness of active mystical prayer to increase the union of love which is the way of active union. Its value, he tells us, consists in this efficacy and in it alone. "The same passive exercise," he writes, "doth enable the soul for the future to produce far more efficacious aspirations and elevations than it did or could do before the said passive contemplation. And that readiness for future elevations is the fruit or good effect of such passive exercise. For if it had no such effect or fruit, the passive exercise would be of little profit to the soul."<sup>9</sup> That is to say, this passive contemplation is not, like the primary active mystical experience, an awareness of the substantial union with God, and, apart from a special mission, such as Bernadette's visions at Lourdes, is of value only in reference to that union and for the sake of it.

We are thus brought back to the essence of the mystical way, the central will aspiring to union with the incomprehensible God-head and becoming conscious of this progressive union. As the anonymous fourteenth-century author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* sums up the matter, "Of God Himself can no man think. And therefore I would leave all that thing that I can think, and choose to love that thing that I cannot think. For He (God) may well be loved but not thought. By love may He be gotten and holden; but by thought never."<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, as I have already pointed out, in spite of all diversities of experience the rule of prayer is simple:

"Pray as you can," says Abbot Chapman, "and don't try to pray as you cannot. Take yourself as you find yourself and start from that."<sup>11</sup> And "one should wish for no prayer except precisely the prayer that God gives us — probably very distracted and unsatisfactory in every way. On the other hand, the only way to pray is to pray; and the way to pray well is to pray much. If one has no time for this, then one must at least pray regularly. But the less one prays, the worse it goes."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162.    <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.    <sup>11</sup> Chapman, *op. cit.*, p. 109.    <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

The Jesuit corroborates the Benedictine. "Nothing in the spiritual life," writes Father Steuart, "is so personal and so individual as is prayer. No matter what your method looks like when you come to describe it to yourself or others, if it is what comes easily to you, it is what you are meant to have." If, therefore, I would conclude, as may well happen, anyone feels drawn to pray vocally by the use of liturgical formulas or otherwise, he should not force himself to substitute a purely mental prayer.

### *Union of Will Is What Counts*

As I have pointed out already we are in practice concerned only with those lower degrees of mystical active prayer which are the awareness of a union of will for which men and women of prayer may reasonably hope. For salvation, for perfection, for the attainment of heaven and the degree of our eternal communion with God, it is the union of will that is decisive, not the consciousness of it. Indeed if that consciousness should be rendered impossible or, as in the case of SS. Augustine and Gregory, diminished by obedience to God's will for us and the service of our neighbor, the loss will be everlasting gain. But the consciousness is not therefore unimportant. Far from it. For not only does it foster the growth of the union perceived; it is in itself the most satisfying experience possible to man on earth. This is the witness of all who have experienced it. "Suppose," said Blessed Angela of Foligno, "I were given all the spiritual joys, all the divine consolations and delights which all the saints from the beginning of the world until now testify that they have received from God, and moreover that all worldly delights, both innocent and sinful, were added besides . . . yet I would not to receive them all, part with so much of this wholly unutterable good, as could be measured by the opening and closing of the eyes."

This of course is the language of hyperbole. But it indicates joy indescribably great. Also it refers to a degree of conscious union which can be the lot only of a few chosen souls. Bernadino de Lavedo, however, speaks more generally to the same effect:

"Let him who has ears to hear, hear and learn that, in this absence of thought," the will being fixed upon the unintelligible,

"is comprised a vast world which includes perfect contemplation and contains all that is, so much so, that when this is present the rest is nothing. For truly in the presence of our Lord and God all created things are nothing. — Of the soul, then, which though the union of love in quiet contemplation, is busied with God, one can in truth say that one should think of nothing. For in this absence of thought, she has what is the essence of all thought."<sup>13</sup>

If the central will is thus fixed upon God, whether we are or are not aware of the union, all disturbances and fluctuations whether of external circumstances or within the soul are below this supreme peace and cannot destroy it. "If God," writes Abbot Chapman, "does not wish us to have peace, we must be satisfied with confusion and that is peace of an elusive kind,"<sup>14</sup> when this ground or apex "is" continually united to God's Will, "if the soul turns to prayer it *feels* worry and anxiety and trouble and bewilderment . . . also an unfelt, yet real acquiescence in being anxious, troubled, and bewildered and a consciousness that the *real* self is at peace while the anxiety and worry is unreal."<sup>15</sup> For these changes and disturbances whether external or psychological belong to the lower world of half-being, and the spirit is held fast by the Fullness of Divine Reality. Thus is fulfilled for us the prayer of that lovely Collect for the Fourth Sunday after Easter. "O God Who makest the minds of Thy faithful to be of one will" — diversities of experience and thought united on a higher level by the will receiving God's work in it — "grant that Thy people may love what Thou commandest and desire what Thou dost promise": May we do God's will and for reward receive Himself "that amid all the changes of the world, our hearts" — the central self, apex, or fine point of the spirit — "may there be fixed" — the magnet pointing steadily — "where true joys are to be found."

So we may well reply with our Amen to Father Baker's blessing: "The blessed spirit of prayer rest upon us all."

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Marcelle Auclair's *Life of St. Teresa*, English translation, p. 81.

<sup>14</sup> Chapman, *op. cit.*, p. 255.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.



*God is too good to be used; and mysticism is much more than a means to an end. But many readers still want to know the practical advantages of mysticism. Fr. Martin is Novice Master in Brookline, Mass.*

## Why Mysticism?

*Father Martin, O.C.D.*

THOUGH mysticism is an integral part of our Catholic Faith the number of Catholics interested in it is very small. I think one reason for this disinterest lies in the failure to see much usefulness in it. For many even truly pious Catholics the term "mysticism" conveys a vague notion of an exotic form of life granted to a small number of privileged souls — a form of life which would be of little use to them. Because I feel that more Catholics would take greater interest in mysticism if they realized that it is something practical, I would like to consider here its practicality, first, for the mystic himself, and, second, for others. It would be well, first, to define mysticism.

According to Father Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen, O.C.D., the word, "mysticism," is usually employed in a twofold sense: first of all, to designate the mystical life and, second, to indicate mystical experience.

The mystical life signifies the progressive extension of the government of the Holy Spirit in the soul by means of an ever increasing activation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This divine government need not make itself "felt" but when it becomes pronounced, the soul becomes aware of it in some way, at least by its effects. Mysticism taken in this sense is part and parcel of the doctrine of our supernatural "organism" in the spiritual life. According to this doctrine a soul in the state of grace possesses an organism consisting of sanctifying grace, the infused theological and cardinal moral virtues, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. As one element of the organism grows all the other elements grow pro-

portionately. And so growth or advancement in the spiritual life always implies growth in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, a progressively more pronounced activation of these gifts by Him or, in other words, a mystical life. The action of the Holy Spirit through His gifts is absolutely necessary for progress and perfection in the spiritual life and is therefore given to all who set out on the road to perfection. In this article I do not intend to consider the utility of mysticism in this first sense, but rather in its second sense, that is, from the aspect of mystical experience.

In the sense of mystical experience mysticism indicates the mysterious experience had by quite a remarkable number of persons — but with very different degrees of certainty in the various cases — of a direct intervention of the divine in their spiritual life. Furthermore, the various phenomena of this mysterious experience could be divided into two main categories. The first goes by the term “contemplation” and the second by the term “extraordinary experience.”

The category of phenomena designated by the term “contemplation” concerns simply the life of union with God, particularly in mental prayer, and in which certain souls have the experience that they are particularly united to God by a manner of knowledge and love that is different from that which the soul procures for itself with personal application. This knowledge has something intuitive or instinctive about it and does not take on a determinate conceptual form but is characterized rather by a “sense” of the divine reality.

The phenomena in the category of extraordinary experience are of two kinds — those which take place only in the spiritual order and those which flow over into the body. Examples of the former are visions, revelations, locutions, or particular feelings distinct from contemplation because they take on a determined conceptual form. Examples of the latter are ecstasies, stigmata, and levitations.

### *Value of Mysticism to the Mystic*

Mystical experience presents a source of valuable instruction to the one upon whom it is bestowed. Among the members of the Church there are found souls who possess knowledge of our Faith

beyond that given to them by conventional instruction. Oftentimes they themselves are unable to account for the extent, accuracy, and depth of their knowledge. On investigation, however, these souls are found to be enjoying a high degree of contemplation which has become the secret source of their instruction.

St. Teresa of Avila in the *Interior Castle* illustrates this point. Explaining contemplation in the 5th Mansion she answers the question of how the soul understands that God has been in it and it has been in God. She writes: "I am not saying that it [the soul] saw it at the time, but that it sees it clearly afterwards, and not because it is a vision, but because of a certainty which remains in the soul, which can be put there only by God. I know of a person who had not learned that God was in all things by presence and power and essence; God granted her a favor of this kind, which convinced her of this so firmly that although one of those half-learned men whom I have been talking about and whom she asked in what way God was in us . . . told her that He was in us only by grace, she had the truth so firmly implanted within her that she did not believe him, and asked others, who told her the truth, which was a great consolation to her."

We read in the life of the Curé of Ars of a certain Père Chaffangeon, who remained for hours before the altar without even moving his lips. When asked by the Curé what he said to God, the old peasant replied, "Oh, He looks at me and I look at Him." It is to souls like this old man that God gives extraordinarily deep understanding of our Faith.

Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity's profound understanding of the great mysteries of Christian life — our incorporation in Christ, the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in our hearts, etc. — can be traced to meditation on the Epistles of St. Paul and the mystical works of St. John of the Cross but most of all to long hours of contemplative silence. The true source of her doctrine — a doctrine in absolute conformity with the surest principles of mystical theology — is summed up in one of her own statements, "What He [the Word] teaches within me is ineffable."

Souls who have a solid theoretical knowledge of their Catholic Faith have this knowledge transformed into a living reality by mystical experience. It is one thing to have a friend describe the



beauty of the Grand Canyon and quite another thing to go and see the Grand Canyon for oneself. In the same manner, to hear or read a description of God's infinite beauty is different from looking upon God Himself after He, by mystical favors, has drawn aside some of the veil that hides Him from the usual view of men.

To learn in a letter of the love of a fiancé is not the same as hearing a profession of this love from his own lips. In like manner, for a soul to read of God's love for it is much different from that same soul actually experiencing this love infused into it through one of God's mystical gifts.

In passing it might be noted that, while mystical experience teaches God's truths as living realities, it is not always easy, or sometimes even possible, to convey to others what has been received in this experience. St. Teresa, for example, writing of the 6th Mansion, says that in this Mansion the Lord suspends the soul and reveals to it certain mysteries and imaginary visions it is able subsequently to describe. But when the visions are intellectual they cannot be described because of their sublimity.

### *Value of Mysticism to Others*

The knowledge we have of God comes to us from our reason and from His revelation. The truths of this knowledge are guarded, defended, infallibly defined, and explained by the Catholic Church. Our Catholic theology is made up of these truths. This Catholic theology is contained at length for the theologian in his theology books; for the ordinary layman it is accurately summed up in his catechism.

Now the truths of our theology, though unchangeable, were never meant to remain untouched. On the contrary, they are to be penetrated more and more deeply, developed more fully and further truths are to be deduced from them. Under the infallible guidance of the Catholic Church it is the privilege and the challenge of the members of the Church to learn these truths, to penetrate and develop them, and to deduce new truths from them.

While this is true, unfortunately it is possible for Catholics to rest content with the knowledge they acquired the first time they became acquainted with the truths of Catholic theology and leave

it at that. Some, on the other hand, may read over these truths many times and seem to get little more out of every new perusal. In short, it is possible for Catholics to make little progress in necessary understanding and development of the truths of the Faith. To remedy this situation mysticism is an excellent means toward progressive appreciation and development of these truths. Mysticism is especially a good means for giving depth to an extensive knowledge of the Faith.

Among the various ways that mysticism offers assistance in this matter I consider the following important: First of all, mysticism manifests the importance the affective part of us has in knowing the truths of our Faith. These truths were never meant to be considered coldly as one might consider the truths of mathematics. Instead they are to be reflected upon by the intellect with the will furnishing a loving disposition that aids in penetrating them more and more deeply. True mysticism is always characterized by a strong accent on the affective element in the understanding of divine truths and stresses the necessity of affective consideration.

Second, at times there is the tendency to overemphasize the scientific part of our theology and thereby deny the rightful attention to theology's supernatural and divine data. Theology runs the danger of becoming too much a mere technical, intellectual science. Mysticism is a good brake on this tendency. It curbs it by manifesting the necessity of considering the supernatural and divine data of theological science.

Third, those who are charged with the defense of the truths of the Faith must do this with clear concepts of these truths. At times these defenders must turn to the mind of the Church, *sensus Ecclesiae*, to form these concepts. The liturgy offers a very good manifestation of this mind of the Church, but the understanding of these truths given to souls by mystical experience can furnish the Church's defenders with another means of knowing her mind.

Fourth, our knowledge of the truths of our Faith is limited. Mysticism makes us do something about this limitation. Mystical experience, in which a deep penetration of these truths is had and in which there is the realization that a much deeper penetration is still possible, opens new horizons to human intelligence. It tells of further truths that are just ahead and spurs on human intelligence

to intensify its search for more of the truths within the inexhaustible treasury of divine truth.

Last of all, the understanding of divine truth communicated to souls by true mystical experience has always the object of leading souls to union with Christ. Therefore mysticism is a force which combats the unconscious tendency to consider the Faith too much as something to be known and not enough as a means of union with Christ.

Now I might note in passing that true mystical experience, whether passive contemplation or extraordinary phenomena, is a free gift of God, and no one can merit it. According to St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross, one should not even desire the mystical experience of extraordinary phenomena because of dangers it involves. On the other hand, we may desire passive contemplation as a powerful means of helping us arrive at perfection. Passive contemplation, though a purely gratuitous gift, is nevertheless one that God readily bestows upon souls who dispose themselves for it by generously serving Him. It is a gift that we should dispose ourselves to receive, but should God not will to bestow it upon us in spite of our efforts, we should love His holy will in this and know that He can bring us to perfection by other means.

Let me point out once again that mysticism has a practical value. It has practical value both for the mystic and for others — those who have contact with mystical souls. In conclusion, we could consider this last statement verified in the life of one of the most famous champions of the Church, St. Augustine.

All must admit that his mystical knowledge and experience brought him to the very pinnacle of Christian perfection. At the same time they guided him in all his research and gave a particular characteristic to his elevated and vast theological construction. He constructs a method or way of truth which imparts, above all else, a desire to embrace God with all the soul and he thereby gives the true foundation to knowledge and love, faith and reason, in the lives of men. He constructs a method or way of life, rightly called affective, but in the sense that the intellect together with an intensely virtuous life, ardent in charity and elevated by prayer, concur for the acquiring of truth under the direction of mystical wisdom.



*The author, a Jesuit of St. Marys, Kansas, has here a convincing answer to one of the most popular and vexing questions: How does one unite contemplation and action?*

## Cultivating Contemplation in Action

John D. Zuercher, S.J.

THE Catholic layman sometimes envies the monk in the monastery or the priest in the rectory. He would like to escape regularly from the tangling traffic and the screaming children in order to enjoy quiet communion with God. Spiritual perfection looks impossible where he is; he has such little time for his "spiritual life." Look at the numberless hours which must be given to making a living, keeping a home — separated from God.

Is this outlook 100 per cent correct? An annual retreat and time for prayer is good. But Caryll Houselander questions the over-all attitude of such persons.

The only time that they do not regard as wasted is the time they can devote to pious exercises: praying, reading, meditations, and visiting the church. All the time spent in earning a living, cleaning the home, caring for the children, making and mending clothes, cooking, and all the other manifold duties and responsibilities, is regarded as wasted. Yet it is really through ordinary human life and the things of every hour of every day that union with God comes about.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, the duties and recreation involved in our state of life can be a means of becoming closer to God. For instance, the morning offering dedicates my entire day to God. But some would like more than this brief thought of God; they would like to be more continually conscious of Him in their life, somehow *always* joined to Him. They would like to be a "contemplative in action," finding God in all things.

---

<sup>1</sup> Caryll Houselander, *The Reed of God* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1944), p. 8.

Such an attitude may seem possible for a Trappist, tilling the soil while picturing to himself our Lord on the Cross. But can the layman be constantly in touch with God while signing checks or feeding the baby? Yes, many people who are very active enjoy a simultaneous contact with God; this contemplation in some degree is more common than we think. But how does it "work"?

## God in Our Action

Just what would it mean for you to be a contemplative in action? It would *not* mean that you simply try to devote more time to prayer, to jump back and forth between work and prayer more often. That is the approach of our friend above. Rather, contemplation in action, as here understood, means that while you are engaged in your daily activities, you are simultaneously and consciously knowing and loving God. Rather than alternating between the task at hand and God, you somehow recognize and love God while doing that very task. Although the saints achieve this by an extraordinary mystical grace, a pure gift of God, there is another type of contemplation which you can strive for and achieve, with God's more ordinary help.

But how would this be possible? Won't trying to think of God while reading the newspaper throw our minds out of joint? The answer is not simple, though in practice it is entirely possible. We can know God in and love God through our activity by relating that activity to God, our Creator, Redeemer, and Last End. Without lessening our attention to the task at hand, we can see in that task a connection with God.

As reason and revelation tell us, all things are *from* God and all things are meant *for* God. There is an invisible *but real* connection between God and every person we see, all stuff we touch, every melody we hear. God casts His knowing eye on the conglomeration of things that surround us; all creatures are subject to His dominion. Is the bird flying? Does the tree grow? Does the moon really exist? Yes, but only because at each moment of the bird's flight, the tree's growth, and the moon's existence they enjoy a bond of union between themselves and the power of their Creator. Further, though it is difficult to understand, God shares His divine nature in a

mysterious way with His special friends, those who possess sanctifying grace. God is indeed not only all around us — He is within the most private office of my soul.

Like the electric light bulb, whose brightness ceases when the wall plug is pulled out, so also the beauty and goodness and very existence of the creature (ourselves included) would cease if the connection with God were broken. And, this is the point, we can become more and more aware of God's marvelous influence on all things, know intuitively that things come to me from God. For God's generosity constantly presses itself on me. Chesterton has said of our attitude toward our Creator:

It is not only true that the less a man thinks of himself, the more he thinks of his good luck and of all the gifts of God. . . . It is also true that he sees more of the things themselves when he sees more of their origin; for their origin is a part of them and indeed the most important part of them. Thus they become more extraordinary by being explained.<sup>2</sup>

So there is a foundation, constantly present, for *knowing* and *seeing* the mystery of God "behind" or "inside" everything. In addition we can be united to God through creatures by *loving* Him in them. Love is usually shown by action, by doing something for another. We write a letter, give our son a new ball, run an errand. Our motive or purpose for each action can become more and more conscious. For instance, a family man who is happily married carries with him a certain joy and enthusiasm throughout his working day. Surely he is intending to plow this field or add columns of figures, but he also can have a conscious motive of "bringing home the bacon." This enthusiasm may wear off at times, but a man in love will never lose it entirely. We can have this same type of complex motive present in our actions — doing things for God as well as for other reasons. The nurse in the hospital who is conscious of the fact that she serves Christ in every patient has this. Father Steuart describes this:

To do what we do cheerfully and willingly, having more and more as our real and concrete motive for this the simple desire that we may thereby do God's will (whatever other good motives there may be too), is always literally to pray, and it is to pray literally always. It is to adore, to praise, to thank, to ask — possibly with even more sincerity and efficacy than there might be under a more explicit formula, because there our prayer extends into the whole of our responsible life,

---

<sup>2</sup> G. K. Chesterton, *St. Francis of Assisi* (New York: Doran, 1924), p. 110.



leavening and lifting it all, bringing the whole surface of our wills into harmonious contact with God's.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, "There's more there than meets the eye," as we would say. There can be a spiritual dimension in our life — seeing God behind all things, loving God with all our actions, no matter how insignificant they may seem to be.

### *A Life of Give and Take*

Human love grows by accepting gifts and services as well as returning these signs of love. Accepting and returning are the two basic movements of contemplation in action also, of our "love affair" with God. There is a "taking-in" phase and a "putting-out" phase. In the first we are sitting back in the rocking chair of our mind, eyes open and hands outstretched, taking in God's goodness, loving Him in and through creatures. We experience God in a cold glass of water, the virtue of a friend, the goodness of Christ's love, the mystery of the redemption. We sit back and see, enjoy, thank, praise, and love God.

This more passive attitude may be difficult for some to appreciate, because of their temperament, interests, duties, etc. The other phase deals more with activity. We give back to God the little love we can offer Him. We *put out* for Him. We dedicate our daily tasks, sacrifices, success, disappointments. This is more than a morning offering said once and then forgotten. Rather, while sweating and laboring we are aware that the task, well done, is our gift to Him. A man can be selling books for many reasons, simultaneously: to help customers, to pay for his cigarettes, to show love to his family — and to love God. Like the schoolboy who presents his father with a smeared, crayon drawing on Father's Day, so we offer to our Father our meager, imperfect gifts. Fathers are pleased by this.

One of these two phases of contemplation will probably predominate in our outlook. And we can strive toward having one or the other with us always. The "give and take" of life, without destroying our other interests and duties, would be a giving to God and a taking from Him. Our whole life would be a deepening of this friendship with God.

<sup>3</sup> R. H. J. Steuart, S.J., *World Intangible* (London: Longmans, Green, 1934), p. 34.

We could describe this activity as a development of the theological virtues. There would be faith in God, present within us and about us, working for us, showing His love for us. There is the hope that our meager activity would be blessed by His acceptance and rewarded by Him. Love would permeate, penetrate the entire core of our waking hours. Our own interests would be identified with God's.

### *For Example*

I think many are often scared away from this contemplation by a fear of becoming queer. But our minds naturally do similar tricks constantly, without endangering our health. Some examples might help us understand the psychology of this approach.

When we see a new building, you and I will not appreciate it nearly as much as would an architect. In one glance he sees through the brick walls — to its blueprint, the labor, intricate design, strength of columns, internal supports. His previous background and study enable him automatically to penetrate below the surface of the structure. Likewise a composer of music has a much deeper appreciation of a new symphony. So, by previous study, thought, and prayer, we can penetrate the surface of God's creatures and appreciate more fully the harmony of His universe.

The persistence of some of our knowledge is stronger than we sometimes realize. We are conscious of our surroundings, even when absorbed in work. Suppose a person to whom we have an aversion enters the room. Even though we might attempt intense study, we know he is somewhere near us, behind us, making noise over there, etc. Of course, his presence is a distraction; but if the person present is a friend, the warmth and joy which accompanies his presence spurs on our good work. God is such a Friend.

Still again, suppose you meet a stranger on the train; you begin talking about the weather, politics, his family. Suddenly you discover he is the son of a very good friend of yours. Your face lights up; you smile. You shake hands again. He means more to you now. "Say, what was the name of your sick boy again? I do hope he gets better soon. I could stop in to see him the next time I go to the city." Your whole attitude toward this "stranger" is colored

because of this discovered relation. You see two things at once. And yet you are neither queer nor mentally ill because of this double view.

Just as the man on the train is related to your friend, so all creatures are related to God, your Friend. He creates them. He sustains them. And Christ died for every "stranger" we meet. Look at the creature: the label on the front always says, "from God"; turn it over and you read, "for God."

## Cultivation

Of course, caution is in order. Nothing short of a miracle of grace could give us such an habitual attitude without years of effort. The habit is acquired gradually, calmly. It must soak into our whole outlook on life, as a gentle rain.

In order to contemplate God in things, we have to do more than merely see the link. There is something within us, our pride and selfishness, which obscures our continuous vision. We are creature collectors; we want one of each kind, and duplicates of as many as possible. We stop with the creature; we are satisfied with possessing a tiny portion of these gifts without even noticing the Giver.

To overcome this we need mortification and penance, especially that which comes by willingly accepting the disappointments which come from routine living and our own weakness. When we accept creatures it must not be to fill our pockets or devour them on the spot; rather, we hold them at a distance and follow the bond which we know connects them with God. The creature is no longer an *obstacle* between ourselves and God but rather a *link*.

Is this too much to expect? Can we ordinary people hope for this contemplation? Only with thought and prayer — at least some mental prayer. Although this habit is practiced primarily outside the time of prayer, it is understood and acquired primarily during prayer. But our prayer now also looks ahead to our next activities.

Suppose we have an intensely absorbing duty, like writing a scholarship examination. Even then a preceding prayer can keep God with us. Just as we know the examination proctor is always present, we can know God is present ("taking-in" phase). Just as we know we are working for the scholarship, we can be aware that



we are doing it for God ("putting-out" phase). Prayer is prolonged by our action. A lively love, at the base of all, fuses our life of prayer and action into one.

A good way to start putting this spiritual dimension in your life is to focus more on the things you already appreciate. Josef Pieper describes a very ordinary experience: "A man drinks at last after being extremely thirsty, and, feeling refreshment permeating his body, thinks and says: What a glorious thing is fresh water. Such a man, whether he knows it or not, has already taken a step toward that 'seeing of the beloved object' which is contemplation."<sup>4</sup> Or maybe you have something of the poet in you. Gerard Manley Hopkins once said, "I do not think I have ever seen anything more beautiful than the bluebell I have been looking at. I know the beauty of the Lord by it."<sup>5</sup> You and I can have these experiences.

What do *you* love? Your children? Your parents, friends? God is behind them, in them. That's why they are good, and the ultimate reason why they are good to you. If you are grateful by nature, you have a good beginning of seeing God in all. Chesterton writes of St. Francis of Assisi: "It was in a wholly happy and enthusiastic sense that St. Francis said, 'Blessed is he who expecteth nothing, for he shall enjoy everything.' It was by this deliberate idea of starting from zero, from the dark nothingness of his own deserts, that he did come to enjoy even earthly things as few people have enjoyed them. . . ."<sup>6</sup> Contemplation is easier for the humble, grateful person.

Why do you do things? To all the other good reasons you can add the motive of loving God. Gradually each task can become a more conscious service to Him.

### *Myself With God*

St. Ignatius of Loyola used to tell a person who was beginning a job: "Pray as if all depended on God and work as if all depended on yourself." The ideas here presented deal almost entirely with the second half of the formula, the self-activity. Why? Because a mysterious description of the finished product — what a glorious gift

<sup>4</sup> Josef Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation* (New York: Pantheon, 1958), p. 84.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>6</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 109-110.

of God contemplation in action is — might leave us with no more than an admiration for this contemplation. But we are speaking of an “acquired contemplation,” something bought with personal effort. This does not mean that we ever neglect the first part of Ignatius’ adage. This contemplation can be supernaturally advanced only *per Ipsum et cum Ipso et in Ipso*: through the merits and intercession of Christ, together with Christ ever present in our soul, and in the unity of the Mystical Christ on earth.

This new life is a rich existence. It creates a spiritual atmosphere which enlivens our entire day. Formal prayer is not omitted; it is rather extended throughout the day. Our liturgical life is not subordinated; rather, we now have a more worthy and all-inclusive offering to present to the Father through Christ. The intimacy of Holy Communion is not minimized; instead, we will cherish these moments as the most intensified experience of union.

The world is struggling to be redeemed; and we are engaged wholeheartedly in the struggle, along with Christ. No longer can anything be done lazily, nothing is neglected; for we have another good reason for doing all things well. Our life is a constant communion with God. We gratefully accept His gifts and joyously return our gifts to Him. Our entire life will now be our “spiritual life,” a spontaneous and perhaps uninterrupted union with God.

There is no Christian, however little of a “devout” person he may be, who cannot gently grow in this way into a God-awareness, and there is surely no way as clearly calculated as this to give meaning, direction, and spiritual value to our most secular avocations. Thus they can become permeated with the qualities of dedication, charity, courage, understanding, purity, humility, truthfulness which mark the life of witness to Christ in the world.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Michael de la Bedoyere, *The Layman in the Church* (London: Burns & Oates, 1954), p. 100.

*St. Thomas More is one of the shining examples of the humanness of mysticism. The author is a Dutch Carthusian monk.*

## English Mysticism in the Life of St. Thomas More

Benoît du Moustier

THAT a humanist and statesman like Sir Thomas More had anything to do with mysticism is surely not so evident at first sight. Some of the prayers he composed may bear witness to his exceptionally intimate intercourse with God; the few devotional writings he left behind, in any case, are not such as to rank him among the mystic authors of his country.

Nonetheless, Sir Thomas was so well read in his English mystics that his own prose clearly bears the stamp of Walter Hilton's school. Professors Reed and Chambers long ago took the trouble to demonstrate this point in detail. But what is more, the holy chancellor had assimilated the doctrine of his country's mystics to such an extent that his behavior and his sayings, all his life, even when he had reached the heights of earthly glory, breathed their spirit.

More had satiated himself with the wisdom of the great medieval mystics of England during the four years of his stay at the London Charterhouse. The *Cloud of Unknowing* and Hilton's *Scale of Perfection* at that time found there, more than ever, enthusiastic admirers and diligent transcribers. There the hidden heroes of solitude whose virtue would one day sustain the proof of fire and blood in torture were trained according to the very same masters who made More, awaiting his own martyrdom, a Carthusian in the world. And thus there is, as Professor Reed noted, a curious connection between St. Thomas More's hair shirt and his prose style.



Both point back to his English mystics, both have their origin in his quiet days of prayer, reading, and meditation, from that period of introversion and self-discipline with the monks of the London Charterhouse which was to be decisive for all his life.

### *Why Not a Monk?*

Why did he not stay there? He wanted so much to do so, his mentality was indeed monastic, his aptitudes for the life evident. He would undoubtedly have been admitted; his behavior had edified everyone. He was so mortified, drank no wine, seldom went out; he passed the whole day at his prayers or with his books, never missed the long night Office; he tamed his young rebellious flesh and blood with a hair shirt and a discipline. . . . All expected that sooner or later he would enter the novitiate, and when finally, in 1503, he left, many must have thought that it could only be in order to ask admission at the Franciscans of the Observance at Greenwich.

Two years later he was married and stood in the middle of the turbulent intellectual and political life of his time. Had he given up the monastic ideal so that he might enjoy life, as Msgr. Hallett seems to suggest? His intimate friend Erasmus offers another solution. Not as a weakling and a deserter, but after serious reflection and with firm decision, did Thomas More leave the monastery. His was a very passionate nature, and what Erasmus tells us of More's early love adventures would seem to indicate that his young years were not altogether free of blame in this respect. And he was always deeply conscious of his own frailty. Afterward, when foreseeing the possibility of a death in horrible torture, he put all his trust in God alone, praying for strength with touching humility.<sup>1</sup> When a thorough knowledge of his passions had been attained, he reasoned that, being as he was, he ought not to undertake the risk of celibacy; that in his case this would mean tempting God; that his choice ought to be "to become a chaste husband rather than an impure priest." Had not the inspired eulogist of virginity

---

<sup>1</sup> The penalty for high treason (of which More was accused) consisted of being hanged, but let down before dying. After that, the victim was disemboweled alive and quartered.

himself given the advice: "If they have not got the gift of continence, let them marry; better to marry than to feel the heat of passion" (1 Cor. 7:9)?

Five years later he already had four children and when in 1511 his wife died, before a month elapsed he went to his pastor one Sunday evening, showing him a dispensation to get married again the following day without having to wait for the usual preannouncements in church! It is true that this haste was strongly influenced by his desire to give his children the mother they needed. Yet he undoubtedly experienced to a high degree the charm of conversing with women and he possessed an exceptional gift for leading them and dealing peacefully and affably with even the most troublesome females. In his patriarchal home of children and children's children, the female element dominated and among them especially his second wife was by no means the easiest character to deal with. Nonetheless his natural inclinations, ennobled by virtue, made him an ideal husband and head of the family. He went so far that he could bear witness to his two subsequent mothers-in-law that he loved them like his own mother, and in an epitaph he composed for himself, he said he was unable to decide which one of his wives was dearer to him; that if fortune and religion had allowed it, he would quite well have had them both at the same time!

### *Monk in the World*

We have gone pretty far astray from English mysticism and Carthusian life in the world, you are thinking. — Not so very much! The mystics of Great Britain were always remarkably matter-of-fact and realistic, preserving even in their most sublime works a sense of humor which sets them quite apart in the literature of mysticism.

No, St. Thomas More never forgot his Carthusian cell and his early monastic ideal. Merriment, an open eye for all that is good and beautiful in God's creation, and the Carthusian spirit do not exclude each other. St. Bruno, the founder of the Carthusian Order, left us a highly poetical description of the beauty of nature in his Calabrian wilderness. The Latin he writes bears witness to his literary culture. The choir Bible of the first monks of the Grande-

Chartreuse, preserved at Grenoble, is a marvel of taste and miniaturistic art. The sites chosen by these ascetics for their monasteries are still impressing us by their beauty, and when we read through a list made up by the fifteenth-century Carthusian Werner Rolevinck, we must conclude that there was hardly a branch of either art or science of those times which had not a student or an adept somewhere in a Carthusian hermitage.

More ordered both his individual and his family life according to a monastic and even Carthusian model. He did not take more than five hours' sleep and dedicated the first hours of the day to his devotions. Every morning he heard Mass; and he had such a high idea of the dignity of the Holy Sacrifice that once he made even the king wait. When the royal summons reached him while at Mass, he replied that he was busy serving a greater and better Lord and had first to finish that. And Henry VIII, then himself still pious, did not take offense.

Sir Thomas liked even to serve Mass and to carry the cross in processions. Clad in cassock and surplice, he took part in the singing of Mass and Office in his parish church at Chelsea. Even when he had become Lord Chancellor, he continued to do so. When detained as a prisoner in the Tower and unable to take part in the liturgy in the normal way, he used at least to dress with some special care on the feast days of the Church.

His favorite prayers were a choice of Psalms, his favorite study the Fathers of the Church, in whose works he was well read, indeed to a far greater extent than many a theologian of our own day. Next came the Latin and Greek classics. He consecrated his talents as a writer to the service of the Church, the apologetical essays indeed being the most numerous among his writings.

In food, clothing, and way of living he was very sober and natural, quite according to that *quaedam sancta rusticitas et simplicitas* which ought to characterize the life of St. Bruno's children. He did not abhor that which gives the body innocent satisfactions, says Erasmus, and in that, too, he was a disciple of the so remarkably moderate English mystics. He preferred a diet of lacticinia, fruit, and eggs, just as he had been used to in his Carthusian years.

From the Charterhouse he had taken with him his *cilice* and his discipline and he made a faithful and bloody use of them. His wife



wondered where his shirts were washed. His eldest daughter and confidante, "Meg," did the washing so that the stains of blood should not come under indiscreet eyes. Still preserved as a precious relic, the small penitential garment continues to tell us its wordless story of how merry and joking Thomas More was wont to live in the intimacy of his cell. For even a cell, an imitation of a Carthusian's hermitage, he had in the garden of his country house at Chelsea. There he retired on Fridays in more severe seclusion, in prayer and fasting, meditation and study, and works of penance.

His outlook on life likewise was kin to that of his mystics and of the late-medieval, humanistic Carthusians: *l'humanisme dévot*. On the one hand, a warm interest in the beauties of creation, the progress of sciences, the new discoveries, and art; he loved his garden and was fond of animals; he kept relations with all the great minds of his time; he made music with his family and commissioned such artists as Quinten Matsys and Holbein — on the other hand, he was totally detached from things earthly, so free from ambition and desire of money that it made his second wife desperate. "What will you do," she said, "that you list not to put forth yourself as other folk do? Will you sit still by the fire, and make goslings in the ashes with a stick as children do? — What would you do, I pray you? — By God, go forward with the first; for as my mother was wont to say, God have mercy on her soul, it is ever better to rule than to be ruled. And therefore, by God, I would not, I warrant you, be so foolish to be ruled where I might rule."

"By my troth, wife," quoth her husband, "in this I dare say you say truth, for I never found you willing to be ruled yet."<sup>2</sup>

When he refused to recognize the claims of his royal patron on ecclesiastical supremacy, the duke of Norfolk warned him that the anger of a prince means death, and he had better incline somewhat to the king's pleasure. "Is that all, my Lord?" quoth he. "Then in good faith is there no more difference between your Grace and me, but that I shall die today and you tomorrow."<sup>3</sup> He saw everything in the light of eternity, remaining even-tempered in prosper-

<sup>2</sup> Harpsfield, *The Life and Death of Sir Thomas More*, ed. Hitchcock (1932), p. 95.

<sup>3</sup> Roper, *The Life of Sir Thomas More*, ed. Hitchcock (1935), p. 72.

ity and trial, and exhibiting always that mentality of a Christian stoic which Martindale finds so characteristic of early Carthusian spirituality. More's laconic and often humoristic booklet on the *Four Last Things* gives an eloquent demonstration of this. The motto is significant: "Remember at all times what thou must come to at last, and thou shalt never do amiss" (Ecclus. 7:40).

Even his family life was ordered to a monastic pattern. All the household gathered for evening prayers, concluded with *Salve Regina* and *De profundis*. On feast days all assisted at the entire Divine Office, including Matins, in the parish church. At table the members of the family read in turns, as in a monastic refectory, terminating with: *Tu autem, Domine, miserere nostri* and *Deo gratias*.

And withal, the whole life at Chelsea was so permeated with idyllic charity and fresh Christian joy that the renaissance celebrities who were at times admitted to share it for some days have praised his home in enthusiastic terms, Erasmus most of all. Henry VIII liked to visit the Mores, sat with them for dinner, and walked in the garden with his favorite, an arm around his shoulder. St. Thomas More, authentic disciple of the English mystics and Carthusian in the world, surely is one of the most human and most lovable among God's dear saints.

### *De Cella ad Caelum* (From the Cell to Heaven)

When he had fallen into disgrace and been imprisoned in the Tower for his convictions, he found there the full Carthusian happiness for which his soul had never ceased craving. The lieutenant, his old friend Sir Edmund Walsingham, apologized for the unpleasant "hospitality" he had to offer him. "Master Lieutenant," More replied, "I do not dislike my cheer. But whensoever I do so, then thrust me out of your doors." And to Meg he avowed: "I believe, Meg, that they that have put me here thinking they have done me a high displeasure. But I assure thee on my faith, my own good daughter, if it had not been for my wife and you that be my children, whom I account the chief part of my charge, I would not

have failed long ere this to have closed myself in as straight a room, and straighter too. . . . Me thinketh God maketh me a wanton, and setteth me on His lap and dandleth me.”<sup>4</sup>

In the morning of May 4, 1535, after a year of increasingly hard imprisonment, he was standing at his window with Meg admiring the beauty of the rising day. Suddenly they heard a rumble from below and looking down they watched the first of the English martyrs, the three Carthusian priors and the Brigittan Friar Reynolds setting out on their journey to a horrible death at Tyburn. Once more, the sight of the venerated habit recalled to his mind his four years in the London Charterhouse. “Lo, dost thou not see, Meg,” he said, “that these blessed fathers be now as cheerfully going to their deaths as bridegrooms to their marriage?” And he compared his life with theirs. “What a great difference there is between such as have in effect spent all their days in a straight, hard, penitential, and painful life religiously, and such as have in this world, like worldly wretches as thy poor father has done, consumed all their time in pleasure and ease, licentiously.”<sup>5</sup> This was the exaggeration of the saints and the mystics after a moment of dazzling divine illumination. We saw well enough that his life was not all “consumed in pleasure and ease licentiously.” It deserved for him the grace to pass from his cell to heaven, and that *via* the scaffold of a martyr.

A great Dutch writer of the present day has written that the English mystics renounced the world gracefully, not in a loveless manner. They took leave of it in a gentle, friendly way, he says. They renounced this world *because* they loved creation, but more than creation they loved Jesus, its Creator and Redeemer. St. Thomas More’s life and death bear striking witness to the truth of this statement. Was there ever a more humane and gentle austerity than his? And who ever more gracefully laid down his life than this martyr, who going up the scaffold, joked: “I pray you, Master Lieutenant, see me safe up, and for my coming down let me shift for myself?”

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.



Canon Carter, who is Principal of St. Joseph Teachers College, Montreal, reasserts the basic idea of Plato, Aristotle, and Aquinas: Contemplation is the goal of education.

# Education for Contemplation

Very Rev. G. Emmett Carter

ONE of the most encouraging movements in the Church in America at the present time is the trend to recognize and correct our deficiencies in intellectual leadership. So much has been written on the subject that it is not necessary for us to review it here. A basic principle which has risen from this new awareness is that the intellectual has an autonomy of its own. This constitutes a reversal of the previous and not entirely eliminated tradition that all subjects in Catholic schools should be studied more for their apologetical value than for their own self-sufficient truth. This, of course, is disastrous both to apologetical and intellectual achievement. Cardinal Emmanuel Suhard was one of the leaders in the modern phase of this movement. In his *Growth or Decline* he writes, "Your research must bear first on pure truth and disinterested science, you must pursue truth for itself without, however, ignoring its applications, you must penetrate more and more deeply the secrets of nature whose enigma is a constant appeal to seek higher, even to God Himself. You must integrate the conclusions of your several fields of specialization in order to try and form a cosmic vision of the universe. In this effort you must not involve any consideration of interest be it even apologetical; you must seek only what is. Your loyalty will be equaled only by your open-mindedness and your effective co-operation with all those, believers and unbelievers, who pursue the truth with all their souls. You will not hesitate to give yourselves entirely and in the joy of knowing to your vocation of scholars."

Accompanying this independent and objective research as the proper role of the Christian scholar, and for that matter, of the Christian in any walk of life, we have the equal and accompanying concept of competence. A false representation of "otherworldliness" symbolized in the too narrow interpretation of the words of the *Imitation*, "Son, it behooveth thee in many things to be ignorant," has brought about in Catholic circles an attitude that indifferent performance could be explained away on the grounds of preoccupation with the supernatural. That this is not so is also shown in the same letter by Cardinal Suhard when he says, "Christians, however, can and should do what she [the Church] cannot do herself. Because they are also of this world, they have as much right as others to take part in seeking the truth, to engage in all controversies and transformations of the city in which they are citizens. The 'Children of Light' are too often less clever than the 'Sons of Darkness.' This condition does not spring from any precept of the Lord. To be late with an idea may be a fact, it is not a virtue.

"Your task, therefore, Christian thinkers, is not to follow but to lead. It is not enough to be disciples, you must become masters; it is not enough to imitate, you must invent."

The blueprint of Catholic education is, therefore, drawn up. Since it is primarily an intellectual pursuit, its objectives can be defined. However, the battlefield of modern education has been recently engaged in the discussion of the content of our educational courses. The exaggerated preoccupation with method stemming from extreme psychological positions has brought some of our scholastic procedures to the brink of ruin. Catholic schools have certainly been less affected by this deviation; indeed we are tending to react against it. It is precisely in this reaction, in the necessary emphasis upon the intellectual content of education and the development of true Catholic intellectual leadership, apart from apologetical worries, that we may perceive another danger. It is concerning the positive aspects of this danger that the present article is concerned.

Never in the Suhards, the Congars, the Wrights, or in any of the other leaders of the intellectual movement in the Church, do we find the slightest temptation to forget that the word "intellectual" is very akin to the word "spiritual." The true humanist is

one who is involved in the development of the total potentialities of man. The true Christian is one who goes a step further than the mere humanist and "christofinalizes" all things including his intellectual activity. This is not a sacrificing of the autonomy of the human intellect in its own research, it is a recognition of the universality of the Incarnation and the supernaturalizing of man in all aspects.

As a result, we must continually define our educational objectives in terms of Christian objectives. It would be fatal if, under the guise of emancipating the intellect from any subservience which is not proper to its own dynamism, we fail to recognize that the fullness of this dynamic action is precisely in its upward movement toward God. The "*fecisti nos ad te, Deus*" of St. Augustine must not be interpreted as describing solely our movement toward the supreme good. It is also and, perhaps in primary fashion, our movement toward the supreme truth.

What does a Christian mean when he speaks of contemplation? The true and perfect contemplation, of course, is that which is achieved in the Beatific Vision. In this tremendous and completely active union of man's spirit with God there will be the knowledge of all truth seen in Him and the possession of all good achieved in Him. The spirit will be unable to detach its gaze precisely because there would be no use in looking elsewhere. Everything for which we have been created, everything for which we have searched, everything for which we have thirsted will be found laid before us in such a profusion of infinity that it will take an eternity to explore the object of this contemplation.

But, again, it would be a false otherworldliness for us to brush aside the concept of contemplation as something reserved for us in heaven. It is true that the fullness of contemplation is still reserved for us, but we must never lose sight of those most pregnant words of all the Scripture, "Let us make man in Our own image and likeness." When God made this decision He also meant that from the first moment of man's existence there was for him a limited form of contemplation wherever he might be.

And how do we achieve this contemplation in our present lives? This subject is far too vast for an article of this scope. We discard, therefore, or, should we rather say, we detour, that vast, wonder-



ful, and partially unexplored mountain of teaching in regard to the soul's ascent to its Creator through the mystical ways. Infused contemplation is a gift of God bestowed upon His beloved ones who have served Him well and generously. In its attainment there are all the practices and virtues of the ascetical way as a prelude to the entry into this blessed gift. For present purposes we deliberately limit ourselves to the statement that Christian education should lead in the direction of contemplation, particularly in its intellectual objectives.

Any competent definition of Christian education would have to carry the idea of the fulfillment of man's highest faculties. It is a truism for us to express that it is in man's intellectual knowledge and in his love that we find his highest and first fulfillment. Now, it is the perfection of the intellect to contemplate. Whatever joy there may be in search, it is only a preliminary to the exaltation of possession. And man, as we have said, will not be complete until he has possessed God by knowledge. Let us listen to what St. Thomas has to say to us on this subject. "The end of our desiring is God, so the act by which we are first united to Him is, in root and substance, our bliss; and we are united to God first of all by an act of the intellect. Therefore, the intellect in seeing God is, in root and substance, our bliss. But because this operation is most perfect, and its object most suited to it, there follows from it the greatest delight, which does indeed grace and perfect the activity, as beauty graces youth; and therefore this delight which belongs to the will gives a grace and complement to our bliss. Thus, the origin of final bliss is in vision, but its complement is in fruition" (*Quodlibet*, VIII, 9, Art. 19c).

If we may dare to paraphrase the great Doctor, he is here pointing out that man's perfection must be radically in the contemplation of his intellect. All his search is finally centered on God, and the bliss of his love will follow and give perfection to that act of vision. This is what we say must not be lost sight of in Catholic education. The immediate objectives, the pursuit of temporal happiness, the development of the emotions, the scientific knowledge, the philosophical research, all of these are legitimate, worthwhile, even prescribed duties of the Christian. But they become false gods when once their road is not in the direct line toward the act of

contemplation of God Himself. It is a question of orientation and informing. Orientation because the whole program of the Catholic school at whatever level should be such that it leads the soul Godward; informing (in the philosophical sense) because this is what gives life and color to all true education. We have seen in our time what science without God can do; we have long since known what philosophy without God could do.

The development of the human intellect, its most perfected operation, even on the natural plane, should be a prelude and an introduction to contemplation. It is true that the most ignorant man can love God as much as the great Bonaventure, but the most ignorant man cannot reach God unless he uses his intellect which was not in itself made for ignorance, but a tremendous spiritual power made for the knowledge of truth. And he cannot reach God unless he directs his knowledge, in the final analysis, to that fulfillment of all truth.

In our Catholic schools a great deal is said about the formation of virtue. Indeed, much must be said on the subject. But very often there seems to be lacking that realization that virtue can come only through conviction. Again, if you will bear the term, through "contemplation." Virtue arises from within, it arises because we "have seen God." Virtue is never imposed from without. Regimentation may bring about a form of peace or, more accurately, pacification. It cannot bring about virtue. To use a simple and homely example, when we hear children rattling off prayers in a monotone without any thought of the God to whom they are speaking (whom, in fact, they should be "contemplating"), we wonder what is being achieved in the line of Catholic educational objectives. Better one act of contemplation of God than a thousand prayers with our minds and hearts far from Him.

Nor is this any futile argument about the primacy of intellect and will. The two, as St. Thomas has indicated, go hand in hand and contemplation is not only "a look"; it is rather "a vision" which involves the total reaction of man to what he has seen. In some of the extraordinary gifts which have accompanied the contemplations of the saints, they have become entirely divorced from their surroundings. This is a form of charism by which God wishes to show that contemplation is the total absorption of man in his God. Per-

haps that is the definition of Catholic education. God does not belittle any of man, God does not reduce any of man's activities, since He is their first origin and their last end.

When we think of education in terms of "total absorption in God," we begin to understand what we are trying to do. The *Imitation* has said, "Never have I gone among men without returning less a man." Without quibbling on the interpretation of these words, we can certainly say, "We have never returned from contemplating God, without being more a man." If our Christian civilization were mature enough to understand it, how much better it would be if educators could substitute for "education for citizenship" the expression "education for contemplation."

## *In Praise of Gabriel*

(on receiving his medal inscribed *Guide/Communications*)

In angelology I fell in love  
with Gabriel (but quickly must append  
my *salva reverentia* to Michael,  
high on a scale that hierarchical,  
a wingman blazing justice with a blade);  
true, Gabriel is mercy: and the man  
of weaknesses so weak as mine depends  
on what will best repair his flesh and make  
him chipper as a fullback going to  
the field a second time, or third;

but more:  
my angel swings no sword—he flings the word.

No half a man will tamper with a spirit  
loud as Gabriel, I tell myself,  
for patience on that purer plan has limits;  
he is all a man should wish for, pray to  
if the man would shed his woman will  
and listen to the common sense a power  
from up-there can lower to his ear  
(so mercy is the slighter thing I guess):  
the word will roll a gridiron through his mind.

RAYMOND ROSELIEP



A criticism by an Irish Carmelite, formerly professor of philosophy in the Pontifical University of Maynooth.

# The Real St. Thérèse

Father Noel Dermot, O.C.D.

IN THE English-speaking world discussion about St. Thérèse of the Infant Jesus centers about three publications: Father Etienne Robo's *Two Portraits of St. Teresa of Lisieux* (1955), the *Manuscripts Autobiographiques* (1956), and Msgr. Ronald Knox's *Autobiography of a Saint* (1958). Each of these publications raises the question of the real St. Thérèse: Father Robo's book proposes to substitute a true portrait for the false one fabricated by the Saint's family and friends; the *Manuscripts* gives for the first time the complete text of the Saint's autobiographical writings; Msgr. Knox's translation of this complete text is not simply a literal Englishing of the French text, but rather a presentation or interpretation of the Saint and her doctrine.

In the following pages I propose to examine two of these publications with a view to discovering what new light is thrown on "the greatest saint of our time."<sup>1</sup> I shall begin with the more important of the two, the magnificent four-volume work edited by Father François de Ste-Marie, O.C.D., and published by the Carmel de Lisieux whose full title is *Manuscripts Autobiographiques de Sainte Thérèse de L'Enfant Jésus*.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I shall make a few references to Father Robo's book, but shall not examine its main thesis: that the Saint was a neurotic who managed by force of will to become a saint. I do not think there is anything in this thesis nor that the book has any value. This is, of course, simply an expression of opinion.

<sup>2</sup> It contains exact photostat copies of the three manuscripts which comprise St. Thérèse's autobiography as she wrote it, the first (*Ms. A*) written for Mother Agnes, the Saint's sister, who was her prioress at the time (1896); the second (*Ms. B*) written in the form of a letter to her sister Marie (September, 1896); the third written for Mother Marie de Gonzague (1897). These photostats form, as it were, one volume of a four-volume work, the other three being devoted to Introduction, Notes, and *Vocabulaire*.

### St. Thérèse Comes Nearer to Us

The printers of the *Manuscripts* have shown admirable skill in giving us the feel of the originals; except that the paper is thicker we might be handling the copybooks and writing paper that the Saint handled: dimensions, color (and discoloration), binding, corrections, underlinings — everything is there, down to the “doodling” on the cover of the copybook. Particularly touching and evocative are two loose leaves, yellowed and rather inky: one the *Billet de Profession* which Thérèse “carried on her heart the day of her profession,” the other the first manuscript of the *Offering to the Merciful Love of God*. These give us that sense of human proximity which comes to us in hallowed places and through significant relics.

It has long been common knowledge that the *Story of a Soul* does not contain the complete text of the Saint’s autobiographical writings. The *Story* was written out of the manuscripts by the Saint’s sister, Pauline, Mother Agnes of Jesus, who thought it well to omit certain passages, and who made numerous small changes in the text. The manuscripts had not been at all written for publication for it seems that it was only toward the end of her life that Thérèse had some presentiment of what would happen after her death. It was only gradually that she came to have full confidence in her way of trust and love, and she knew that way would change the whole spiritual life of many souls. It was this that interested her entirely, that the good God should be better loved and understood. In this matter there was full understanding between the two sisters, and so Thérèse had no hesitation in confiding the “book of her life” to her sister with the words: “Add and subtract as you like; it shall be as if I had done it myself. Recall these words of mine later, and have no scruple on the subject.”<sup>3</sup> Mother Agnes took these words quite literally, as she had a perfect right to do,

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Manuscripts Autobiographiques* (in future *M.A.*), II, I, p. 72. Nevertheless Father François thinks that this decision involved a certain renouncement on the part of the Saint, since “the two sisters did not possess the same temperament or the same character.” Pauline was much influenced by the Visitation nuns of Mans and received their Salesian influences such as Thérèse never received. “Pauline was somewhat more cultivated and less intuitive than her young sister; and, in her early years as a religious especially, she was more ascetic and less mystical.” Father François adds that there were times when Thérèse felt spiritually isolated from Mother Agnes and from everybody else around her (cf. *M.A.*, I, p. 74).

for they were repeated on other occasions by the Saint, with the result that a considerable portion of the original manuscripts is now available for the first time and throws new light on the character and doctrine of St. Thérèse.

Mother Agnes added very little to the original text, but she made many omissions and a very large number of small changes. The omissions of more than a line are grouped together and run to thirty pages or about twenty thousand words. From the point of view of quantity it might seem that we have here the material for a new assessment of the Saint's character and teaching, and some people had been expecting — or fearing — this. This expectation, or fear, is dispelled on reading the omitted passages. They are mostly childhood anecdotes or matters that would not be of general interest were it not that Thérèse has become such a very important person. The modern way is to look for significance in the smaller traits of character. Perhaps there is in people nowadays, in a rather bleak world, a desire to feel the near, human presence of the saints — I think this is especially experienced with regard to St. Thérèse.

Certainly some of the omitted passages bring Thérèse much nearer to us. We see her at the age of four so fond of her elder sister Céline that she sits in the classroom quite still for two or three hours. "She is given some work to do, pearls to put on a thread or a handkerchief to sew. She dares not stir, but she sighs deeply from time to time. When her needle comes unthreaded she makes an attempt to thread it herself, and it is a study to watch her, failing to do it herself and not daring to call Marie; after a while one sees two large tears roll down her cheeks. . . . Marie comes quickly to console her and the poor little angel smiles through her tears."<sup>4</sup> We get a much livelier and more personal

<sup>4</sup> Ms. A, Folio 9, *verso*. This is an extract from a letter of the Saint's mother dated March 4, 1877. An extract from another letter of Madame Martin's speaks of little Thérèse's "fits of rage." "When things do not go according to her idea, she rolls on the ground like one in despair. . . . She is a very nervous child" (Ms. A, Folio 8, *recto*). In the manuscript the phrase *bien nerveuse* is rubbed out and the word *exubérante* substituted. This is the only example of interference with the text of the original in a matter of significant ways. There is question, not of the Saint's words but of her mother's. The letter is dated December 5, 1875; Thérèse was then one year and eleven months old. The letter of March 4, 1877, quoted above, shows that the young Thérèse soon learned a high degree of self-control. She was a much-cared-for child, but by no means spoiled.



account of the journey to Rome during which Thérèse, now in her fourteenth year, came out of her shell of timidity and embarrassment. "To my great surprise I found I could converse easily with all the great ladies, with the priests, and even with His Lordship, the Bishop of Coutances. I felt as if I had always lived in this world."<sup>5</sup> The famous interview with Leo XIII is much more vivid and touching in the original account in which Thérèse is removed "by force" and weeping from her post of supplication kneeling at the Pope's feet, her hands joined and resting on his knees. In reading the full account of the journey one is struck by Thérèse's physical and moral courage. She follows the more intrepid pilgrims to the highest stage of the great dome of Milan. She descends into the arena of the Colosseum, in spite of various prohibitions. She makes her way into the cloisters of a Carmelite monastery. Left behind in Assisi she asks the formidable Father Révérony for a place in his carriage among the grave ecclesiastics. Hardest test of all, and on another plane altogether, she screws up her courage to beg her favor from Leo XIII in spite of heavy clerical disapproval, in spite of the fact that nobody else had spoken a word to the Pope, in spite of the ceremony and awe that surrounded the occasion (of which she herself was keenly conscious).

Some (Father Robo among them) have censured the young Thérèse's conduct on the pilgrimage, finding her overbold, overvivacious. It seems to me that her conduct was that of a perfectly normal, very pious, nicely mannered, very lively girl of fifteen. Her interview with Leo XIII shows not only a really heroic courage, but a charming simplicity, tact, and rightness of gesture balanced by a wonderful ease and sweetness on the part of the great Pontiff who "followed (her) a long time with his eyes" as she went out.

Mother Agnes sometimes shortened the Saint's descriptive passages; the fuller text shows that a keen response to the beauty of creation was an important trait in her character. On the journey through the Swiss Alps Thérèse "had not enough eyes for gazing." "Almost breathless in face of such wonders I could wish to be on both sides of the car compartment at once. . . . At the limit of the vast horizon were the great mountains to be seen, their vague contours escaping beyond our ken were it not that their snowy

<sup>5</sup> *Ms. A, Folio 57, recto.*

summits which the sun made to sparkle added a further charm to the lovely lake which held us spellbound.”<sup>6</sup> The reader is constantly struck by the saint’s receptiveness and keenness of perception, and by that amplitude of mind which made her resolve to store up these, the sights of her journey to Rome, against the lean days later on in the convent when there would be “only a little corner of the sky” to look at. “The religious life appeared to me *as it is* with its *constraints*, its little sacrifices accomplished in obscurity. I understood how easy it is, too, for the mind to fold in on itself, to forget the sublime goal of its vocation, and I said: Later, when the time of trial comes . . . I shall remember what I have seen today; the thought of it will give me courage; I shall easily forget my poor little interests in looking at the grandeur and power of God whom I wish to love uniquely.”<sup>7</sup>

It is clear from *The Story of a Soul* that the Saint had a very keen sense of humor, and it is well known that she was (like her father) a very talented mimic, a gift she managed to exercise without ever transgressing charity: “she knew at what point to stop, and did so with perfect tact.”<sup>8</sup> This very attractive facet of Thérèse’s character appears much more clearly in the original manuscripts. We can almost see the smile with which she recalls her ultimatum during her childhood illness that she did not want any visitors “sitting around the bed like a row of onions.” Certain childhood comedies such as we find in most autobiographies are told with wonderful finesse, as when she tells of her fall from a chair into

<sup>6</sup> Ms. A, Folio 58, *recto*. Knox translates: “. . . dazzling in the sun, to complete the splendour of the view,” but it is possible that Thérèse is referring to the mountain tops reflected in the lake.

<sup>7</sup> The Saint’s thought seems to be: having decided to love God only (i.e., to give all her love to God) she finds in Him all she could desire, even at the natural level; and so, the religious life does not involve a constriction of the mind at the natural level, once its goal is properly understood. In *The Story of a Soul* there is a slight reshaping of the text so that it makes the Saint mean rather: when she thinks of the grandeur of God she will love Him uniquely. Knox translates *uniquement* as “above all things” as if the Saint simply meant that God, being so great in His creation, is the best of all objects of desire. It seems to me that both of these interpretations miss the point somewhat. Thérèse does not say she is led to love God (or even to love God more) *because* of His grandeur; neither does she simply mean that God is better than anything else, but rather that everything is found in Him so that one who is in fact trying to love Him uniquely has in fact chosen *all* that is good and wonderful. The Saint’s thought stems from the idea that the initial choice of the religious is *God alone*.

<sup>8</sup> M.A., II, p. 40.

a pail being carried by Victoire, the stolid general help: "My feet touched my head and I filled the pail as tightly as a little chick fills its egg. Poor Victoire stared at me in extreme surprise, having never seen the likes. As for me I only wished to get out of my pail as soon as possible, but I could not move an inch — my prison was an exact fit. . . ." It was the same Victoire who "refused to extend her long arm" to hand down to the little Thérèse an inkstand from the mantelpiece, telling her to get a chair and climb up for it. "I got a chair without saying a word, but, saying to myself that she was not very obliging, I searched in my small head for that which would most sting her. Often when annoyed with me she would call me a 'little brat,' and I found this most humiliating. And so, before jumping down from my chair, I turned round with dignity and said to her: 'Victoire, you are a brat.' Then I took myself off, leaving her to meditate the profound statement I had uttered. . . . I did not have to wait long for the result; very soon I heard: 'Miss Marie, here's Thérèse been calling me a brat.' And I had to go and beg pardon, but I did so without real contrition. All the same Victoire was very fond of me, and I of her."<sup>9</sup>

Thérèse's appreciation of life's comedies is not limited to childhood retrospect; one, the brightest passage in the autobiography, is to be found toward the end of the third manuscript, and was written at a time when the Saint was suffering intensely in body and soul. It is a description of the trials of an "object of charity" among a lot of charitable people. Thérèse is trying to write, but there is so much coming and going that she is constantly opening and shutting *ce fameux cahier*. One of her comforters says: "My poor little sister you must be dead tired writing away like that all day." Thérèse replies: "You need not worry; I seem to write quite a lot, but in truth I write hardly anything." And the good Sister, missing the gentle irony, pronounces judgment: "All the better. I

---

<sup>9</sup> Ms. A, Folio 16, *recto*. Knox's rendering of Victoire's complaint is perfect, and I have borrowed it here. The original reads: "*Mamselle Mari* [with three circumflex accents over the *a* of *Mari*] . . . *Thérasse vient d'me dire que j'suis une mioche.*" It may perhaps be mentioned here that Knox misses the French idiom in another of the Victoire anecdotes, and makes Thérèse "kick" Victoire; it should read "stamped the floor" (Knox, p. 62; Ms. A, 15, *verso*). This is a bad slip and should be corrected, but it is the only slip of its kind in the Knox translation.



am so glad we are all passing by to save the hay, for it means you get a bit of distraction." . . .

This gentle but very firm irony sparkles here and there on almost every other page of the autobiography as first written. An example of it is the final twist of the story of the "Sister who managed to irritate me in everything she did." It will be remembered that the Saint managed the situation so well that the Sister wondered what Soeur Thérèse found so attractive in her. We now know Thérèse's reply to this question: "I answered that it always gave me pleasure to see her (though I did not add that it was an entirely supernatural pleasure)."<sup>10</sup> The same irony or reserve appears in a passage omitted from the account of the coming of a brother into the Saint's life as related in Chapter X of *The Story of a Soul*. Having said what wonderful joy the fulfillment of her lifelong desire in this matter brought her ("like one of those childhood joys that are so vivid the heart is too small to contain them") and with what fervor she set about praying for her seminarist brother, she adds: "It must be admitted that at the start I did not receive any consolations to stimulate my zeal. Having written a charming letter full of feeling and noble thoughts to thank Mother Agnes of Jesus, my little brother did not show any sign of life for almost a year, except for a card to say he was entering the camp for military service." In a note the editor gives us a sample of these "noble thoughts": the young seminarist says how touched he has been by the charity and devotion of Soeur Thérèse, "charity and devotion that has been drawn from the most pure source of divine love." Clearly the Saint views with a certain detachment not only the effusions of the good seminarist but also her own lyrical feelings.<sup>11</sup>

This irony has, of course, nothing to do with sarcasm or facetiousness. It is the mark of the great mind that knows how to accommodate itself to lesser minds, keeping its higher levels in reserve. Thérèse had the good fortune to live in an environment in which sanctity was understood and valued, in which there could be unembarrassed discussion of spiritual things. Yet her sanctity went far beyond those around her, and in speaking at their level she is

<sup>10</sup> Ms. C, Folio 14, *recto*.

<sup>11</sup> Ms. C, Folio 32, *recto*.

keeping a large part of herself in reserve. That is why the original manuscripts are so important and revealing; time and again there is the turn of a phrase, the choice of a word, even an underlining that reveals a higher vision, a larger horizon. Mother Agnes, though very wise, holy, and appreciative of her sister's great sanctity often missed this further horizon. The same is true, in another way, of Monsignor Knox.

### *New Light on the Saint's Doctrine*

What I have just said bears on St. Thérèse's doctrine as well as on her character. Those about her understood part of it, but part of it they did not understand. With the possible exception of Soeur Marie de la Trinité, Mother Agnes understood it best of all, yet even she was deaf to certain parts of it. It is related in the *Novissima Verba* that Mother Agnes asked the Saint on her death-bed about her experience of union with Mary as a novice, and wondered why it had not been told to her before; Thérèse replied that she had told her all about it, but that she had not taken it in. Here and there throughout the manuscript we meet with this heedlessness on the part of Mother Agnes. Perhaps because her own mind is so strong, perhaps because she did not fully realize that she was dealing with a great spiritual genius — and who can blame her for this — she misses some of the deepest and most personal things in the text before her. Monsignor Knox did the same, as we shall see — with rather less justification.

It is only gradually that the full riches of the manuscripts will be brought to light, according as various aspects of the Saint's doctrine are studied or studied afresh. Already one such study has appeared: on the Saint's methods and teaching as mistress of novices.<sup>12</sup> It is likely that many more will appear, and there is room for them, since St. Thérèse is the great spiritual guide of our century, and, despite the extent of her cult, her doctrine is little understood. To illustrate what I mean I shall bring together some texts from the manuscripts on one topic, that of natural and supernatural love or charity.

<sup>12</sup> *Réalisme Spirituel de Sainte Thérèse de Lisieux* by P. Victoire de la Vierge, O.C.D. (Paris, Lethielleux, 1956), 214 pp.

One of the most remarkable and beautiful things in the Saint's story is the affection she had for her father and her sisters. It is remarkable in that it never troubled or called in question the call she felt from her earliest childhood to give herself *entirely* to God. It is also remarkable in that her entering Carmel never interfered with her love of her family, nor did it ever seem to strike her that it might, or that there would be a more complete sacrifice in choosing a convent other than that in which she would be welcomed by two of her beloved sisters. Neither did she, later on, have any scruples about asking Celine to enter the Carmel of Lisieux. Thérèse must have known that many of the saints and servants of God cut themselves off completely from their family as a preparation for giving themselves completely to God. She must have come frequently in contact with that rigoristic attitude according to which all human affection is regarded as a weakness or at best suspect. How did she reconcile such large human affection with the whole-hearted love of God?

In one of the omitted passages Thérèse relates an incident from the pilgrimage to Rome which is insignificant in itself — that is probably the reason for its being omitted — but which calls forth a most revealing comment from the Saint. The whole passage is as follows: "What I suffered before the audience [with the Pope] is known to the Good God alone, and to my dear Celine. I shall never forget the part which she has taken in all my trials; it seemed as if my vocation were her own. (Our love for one another was noticed by the priests on the pilgrimage. One evening being in a group so large that there were not enough chairs, Celine took me on her knees and we exchanged such tender looks that a priest exclaimed: 'How they love each other. Indeed these two sisters will never be able to separate.' Yes, indeed, we did love each other, but our affection was so pure and so strong that the thought of separation did not trouble us, for we knew that nothing, not even the ocean could make us distant from each other. . . .)"<sup>13</sup>

It is clear that, in the Saint's mind, the priest did not fully understand the nature of the love that united the two sisters. He saw it as that love which, though innocent, is yet weak and selfish and demands physical presence or proximity. According to his judgment

<sup>13</sup> *Ms. A, Folio 62, recto.*



the sisters were too fond of each other; such a love would inevitably cause difficulty later on. To this Thérèse replies that he has not overestimated but that he has *underestimated* their love: it is more pure and strong than he suspects, and the proof of this is that they are ready to part, and that the parting would not really divide them. Thérèse is defending the goodness and, as it were, the holiness of a love that is pure and strong.

There is a well-known passage in *The Story of a Soul* in which Thérèse tells of her attachment to a little companion when she was in the *pensionnat* of the Benedictines. Her friend went home for a while, and, when she returned, gave Thérèse an indifferent look. The Saint understood how "narrow and fickle" is the heart of the creature. She adds, however, that her own love was not of this kind, and that she still (at the time of writing, many years later) loved her little companion and prayed for her. She adds that this and another such disappointment taught her a lesson for life, and she reflects as follows: "How could a heart given up to the affection of creatures enter into intimate union with God? I feel that this is not possible. *Even though I have never drunk of the poisoned cup of the too intense love of creatures, yet I feel that I cannot be mistaken in this.* I have seen so many souls seduced by this false light, flying toward it like poor moths and burning their wings; then, I have seen them turn back toward the true, the sweet light of love which gives them new wings, lighter and more brilliant, so that they might fly toward Jesus, that Divine Fire which burns without consuming."<sup>14</sup>

Now the words I have italicized are omitted by Mother Agnes in *The Story of a Soul*. Obviously they are of the greatest importance in understanding the Saint's attitude to divine and human love. As presented by Mother Agnes the passage gives the impression that

---

<sup>14</sup> Ms. A, Folio 38, *recto*. In the original the following words are underlined: "I feel" in the second sentence; "false light" and "love" in the third sentence. I have given a literal translation. Knox translates the last sentence as follows: ". . . They're like the poor moths; dazzled by the lure of this rushlight they fly into it and burn their wings, only to come back later into the soft radiance of that true love which is divine. They need fresh wings, brighter and more nimble than ever, if they are to fly back to our Lord, the divine Fire that burns without consuming what it burns" (p. 113). Like Mother Agnes he avoids the (apparent) mixed metaphor, but he, too, misses part of the Saint's thought. It is worth noting that *Jésus* is translated "our Lord" — this is a feature of the Knox translation.

the Saint is taking a very austere and narrow view of human love, as if every deep affection for creatures excluded the true and whole-hearted love of God. The last sentence quoted above as revised by Mother Agnes speaks of *two* types of love only, false love and divine love. As Thérèse wrote it the sentence spoke of *three* types of love: false love, true love, and divine love. It must be remembered that the Saint is talking of a childhood love which was very deep so that during the absence of her little companion she, Thérèse, constantly "thought of her and treasured a little ring given by her and was full of joy when she returned." It is clear that Thérèse approves of this love, deep though it was and painful, for she is happy in still possessing it, and, moreover, she goes on to state, in the second sentence of the passage quoted above, that she has never drunk of the poisoned cup of a too intense love of creatures. In other words, the love she felt for her companion was not at all of the poisonous kind. She is conscious of the fact that it might have become poisonous if it became "too intense" (*trop ardent*), if it could be said that her heart was "given up" to it (*livré*). Yet as it was it was not poisonous, though very deep and strong; indeed it was its very depth and strength, its constancy and disinterestedness, that made it something good and precious. It was, in a lesser degree, the type of love that united Thérèse and Celine. People could easily mistake it for false love, for its external expression was similar, but the two were essentially different for Thérèse.

This love which is at once true and human is of the greatest importance in the Saint's view of the spiritual life. It is by no means a cold, dutiful, "charitable" love; it is warm, tender, delicate, intimate. It is not simply something of the will; it is in both heart and will. Where there is no danger of temptation to selfish or sensual love or of misunderstanding, it expresses itself in tokens of affection, but, even where such expression is ruled out, it has that same tenderness and warmth in it. We will never understand Thérèse unless we see that her heart was overflowing with this love, and that it went out, not only to Celine and her family but to all her sisters in Carmel and to the whole world.

This is the "true, sweet love" of our text. It is not yet divine love, but it leads to it. It raises the heart, cleansing it, refining it, giving it wings. It does not burn the wings of those who fly toward it;

rather does its gentle light repair the damage caused by the false light, so that new wings appear, "lighter and more brilliant," and on these wings the soul soars aloft toward the divine Sun, the divine Fire.

There is here a wonderful insight into the relation of true human love to divine love. If there is one thing that characterizes all the greatest, most ardent lovers of God it is their wonderful capacity for human love. This is true of St. Teresa of Jesus and St. John of the Cross, of St. Bernard, of St. Francis, St. Dominic, St. Augustine, St. Paul; above all it is true of Jesus Christ Himself, in His love of His Mother, of St. John, St. Peter, and the Apostles, of the family at Bethany, of Jerusalem, of each one of us. But this is divine love? Yes, but it is also human love, of a heart that is human as well as divine. What Thérèse understood was that the human heart had only to discover its own depth and capacity in order to respond to the love of Jesus, whose love is at once human and divine. She understood that it is possible to have this love for creatures, and that we are not asked to put all creatures out of our heart to love Jesus truly. She also understood that the painful deceptions of false love dispose the soul for true love and for divine love; one might almost say that it is better to have met these deceptions than to have remained safely on the ground, loving nobody but oneself.

But she understood something more, and it is this I want to bring out in my third and final text. This is the lovely passage on fraternal charity in the third manuscript, whose counterpart is to be found in Chapter IX of *The Story of a Soul*. Again Mother Agnes made some changes in this passage. Read as they stand in the list of omitted passages these omissions seem unremarkable, being, for the most part, repetitions of what is already said in the *Story*: the love of Christ for His Apostles as the model of all fraternal charity. Nevertheless a careful comparison of the manuscript with its printed counterpart shows that an important change has taken place.<sup>15</sup> In the text as written by Thérèse, the Saint tells us she has something to say about fraternal charity which has come as a grace to her quite recently — *this year*, that is, at the end of her life — and which she thinks very important. What she wants to say is that true fra-

<sup>15</sup> Ms. C, Folio 11, verso, and Folio 12; *Histoire d'Une Ame*, ch. ix, pp. 141-143 (1946 edition).



ternal charity must be modeled on the love which animated Jesus at the Last Supper "when He had just given Himself to His Apostles in the ineffable mystery of the Eucharist."<sup>16</sup> In other words true charity is at once very tender and very practical, an entire *giving* of the self as Jesus gave Himself in the Eucharist. Now it is easy to give ourselves to those who are amiable and attractive, but we must do more than that if we are to do as Jesus did. What qualities had these "poor, ignorant, worldly fishermen" to attract the Son of God? And yet He called them His friends, and He died for them.

The effect of this light on Thérèse was the decision not only to help others, overlook their faults, see their good points — all this she had been doing already, but as well as that to let her love for them shine forth. "Charity must not remain buried deep down in the heart." She has found a new meaning in the image of the candle which shines on all those who are in the house. She is not thinking of the fact that charity is practical — this she had known already — but that it is effulgent, communicative precisely as love. The commandment of charity, the *new* commandment of charity, is given "at a time when Jesus knew that the hearts of the Apostles burned with a most ardent love for Him." It was with an "inexpressible tenderness" that He gave them this new commandment of loving each other as He had loved them. This "ardent," "tender" love seems almost impossible to attain in relation to those who are unattractive and offensive to us, but Thérèse insists that it must be attainable since it is given as a commandment. And it is attainable — this is part of the Saint's discovery — if we allow Jesus to act in us, if we love those around us with His love.

This is a great light and an important discovery. But it is not at all the point that stands out in the text of *The Story of a Soul*. What emerges is this: we must put up with and even love the difficult people around us, and this is possible as Thérèse shows from her own experience — for it is here she introduces the story of the Sister "who managed to irritate me in everything she did." The original text has this in it certainly, but it is relatively unimportant, since there is question of *a grace received this year*, whereas the

<sup>16</sup> ". . . lorsqu'Il sait que le coeur de ses disciples brûle d'un plus arden amour pour Lui, qui vient de se donner à eux, dans l'ineffable mystère de son Eucharistie. . . ."

story of the difficult Sister (as well as the other experiences related at this point) belongs to the past, to the early days of her religious life. What is true is that the years of striving to love the unlovable had prepared Thérèse for the great grace she mentions, which is essentially a grace of knowing and uniting with the heart of Christ in its love for men. In the version given in *The Story of a Soul* the original discovery and "grace" is almost lost, and instead we have a little treatise on how to live with difficult people, the kind of passage that, imperfectly understood and tactlessly followed, has occasioned all sorts of parodies of the "Little Way." The misunderstanding seems to have its roots in the misreading of the scriptural text at the head of the passage: *The second commandment is like to the first*. Mother Agnes seems to have overlooked or failed to appreciate the fact that the word *like* (*semblable*) is firmly underlined,<sup>17</sup> what Thérèse had discovered is that the two commandments of love are *alike*, that we must give our neighbor a love *like* to that which we give to God and receive from Him.

Far more clearly than those around her Thérèse understood that fraternal charity is something of the heart, that it is warm and tender. And she understood this precisely because she was able to see the goodness of her tender love for Celine and for her little school companion. The essential point is that this love must be given to all — the light must shine on *all* who are in the house: it is she who underlines *all*. This can be achieved only through much suffering, much "putting up with people," much prayer. The heart must become more spiritual, less attached to physical charm, personality, agreeableness, and the rest. But this does not mean that the heart dries up, loving only as a matter of duty. That is the mistake that is often made, and it is disastrous; the soul is put on its guard against all affection because of the dangers attending inordinate and unbalanced affection. Thérèse can teach us the art of loving properly, first, those near and dear to us, then Jesus, the Divine Fire of Love; then, "all who are in the house."

### The Critical Problem

The foregoing pages will have given some idea of the extent to

---

<sup>17</sup> Knox also misses the underlining, or rather ignores it as he does generally.

which *The Story of a Soul* differs from the original manuscript, and it raises the problem of the status and value of the former. This problem is linked with two others, that of the exactitude of the pen portrait of the Saint which stands out in Mother Agnes' book and that of the status of the published manuscripts themselves. These problems are akin, but it is very necessary to see the distinction between them, particularly to distinguish between what has been omitted from the published *The Story of a Soul* and what has been changed in the original manuscripts themselves.

The longest of the three manuscripts, Manuscript A, was addressed to Mother Agnes, but when it came to the composing of *The Story of a Soul* Mother Marie de Gonzague insisted that the whole book should seem to be addressed to herself. When, later, somebody asked for Manuscript A Mother de Gonzague was very perturbed and would have burned the manuscript had not Mother Agnes persuaded her that the text could be altered so as to make it appear that it was in fact addressed to Mother de Gonzague. This involved a large number of purely material or nonsignificant changes. There is in addition one passage concerning the Saint's childhood that has been tampered with. It is a quotation from a letter of Madame Martin's in which, in Thérèse's own words, her faults "shine forth with great clarity." It describes the young Thérèse as a "nervy child" (*une enfant bien nerveuse*), and it is immediately followed by the passage already quoted above in which we have "the poor little angel sitting quietly for two or three hours" during Celine's lessons. This passage concerning Thérèse's childhood bouts of nerves was toned down considerably. This is the only example of significant interference with the manuscript. It is unfortunate, yet strangely this very passage serves as a guarantee of Mother Agnes' good faith and accuracy in the matter of her sister's canonization. For the experts have succeeded in restoring the original of this passage, and the result agrees exactly with the text in the copies made by her from the manuscript for the ecclesiastical tribunal concerned with the canonization process.

This is the extent of the changes made in the original manuscript. But if one reads the chapter on the published manuscripts in the second edition of Father Robo's *Two Portraits*, one is left with the impression that there has been a complete rewriting of the manu-

script, erasures and additions on a large scale. This he does by confusing two things: (a) the changes made in the original manuscript itself and (b) the differences between the original manuscript and the published *The Story of a Soul*. I am referring especially to pages 49 to 59, where the reader may see for himself.

When we compare the original manuscript with *The Story of a Soul* we are faced with two questions: the question of portraiture and the question of doctrine. I have dealt with these questions at some length elsewhere and will limit myself here to putting down the conclusions.<sup>18</sup>

Did Mother Agnes give us a false portrait of Thérèse, making her out to be better than she was, more the conventional "good, holy nun"? The answer is quite definitely "No." Those who really know the Thérèse of *The Story of a Soul* will not find the Thérèse of the manuscripts the least bit strange or new. The manuscript brings the Saint nearer to us, but it is the same wonderful person that half the world has long known and loved. There is the same love of Jesus and Mary, the same childlike confidence in the good God, the same purity and delicacy and tenderness of affection, the same finesse and clarity of intelligence. There is the same strength, too, showing itself especially in that final heroism of racked body and darkened soul. In a word, it is the same personality as that presented by Mother Agnes in *The Story of a Soul*. Certain facets stand out more clearly, especially a keen wit and gentle irony, but it is the same personality.

As regards doctrine, I think it will be evident even from what has been said that our knowledge has been considerably augmented. Nothing of importance of what we have learned from *The Story of a Soul* has to be relinquished, but the main traits stand out more clearly, even more boldly, and there are many little touches that give a more finished spiritual doctrine. The manuscript is a quarry in which spiritual writers will be always making discoveries. Although many books have been written on St. Thérèse, many more will surely be written, for she has given a brilliant solution, in her life and doctrine, to the only problem that really matters: how can man (i.e., modern man) love God with his whole

<sup>18</sup> Cf. "The published manuscripts and the *Histoire d'une Ame*. A critical problem?" in *Ephemerides Carmeliticae*, Annus IX, 1958, pp. 3-31.



heart? According as men see that this is the only question that matters they will turn to the little Carmelite for guidance, and in these few pages — written under obedience in odd snatches of time on cheap exercise books — each will find the guidance that he needs. It is only gradually that all the hidden treasures will be discovered, but these discoveries will not render counterfeit what is already given in *The Story of a Soul*. . . . So far was Mother Agnes from presenting *another* doctrine that she was the first to recognize that the manuscript is a real treasure house and that her book by no means opened up every part of it. "It all fits together," she wrote to Msgr. Teil, "and sometimes the smallest detail expresses a most profound reflection."<sup>19</sup>

### The Knox Version

The late Msgr. Knox lived just long enough to complete his translation of St. Thérèse's manuscripts. Though the work was that of a dying man — accomplished at what cost God alone knows — it is as good as, if not better than, anything the well-known translator has done. It has all that wit, liveliness, and fluency that puts such a personal stamp on his famous translation of the Bible. It is the *only* English translation of the original manuscripts.<sup>20</sup>

The Knox translation of the Bible has delighted many common readers and has exasperated many — or nearly all — biblical scholars. I think the Knox translation of St. Thérèse will provoke the same kind of reaction. For those who do not know the Saint very well, or who are not concerned with what *exactly* she says, the present book will make delightful reading, and will give them an introduction to the main traits and themes of what has come to be called Lexovian spirituality. It will also give them a portrait of the Saint which, if not altogether accurate, is perhaps nearer to what they themselves would like the Saint to be. This last especially if they share the translator's background and are rather put off by what is specially French in St. Thérèse.

<sup>19</sup> M.A., Vol. I, p. 93.

<sup>20</sup> *Autobiography of a Saint. Thérèse of Lisieux*. The complete and authorized text of *L'Histoire d'une Ame* newly translated by Ronald Knox, with a Foreword by Vernon Johnson. There are a few pages of notes at the end and eight full-page plates. The frontispiece is a photograph of the Saint taken a few months before her death.

The translator has, as it were, taken up each sentence of the original and transformed it, giving us what was said, not as Thérèse Martin said it, nor yet as Ronald Knox would have said it, but as Ronald Knox would have said it *for* Thérèse Martin. It is in fact presentation rather than translation, just as Mother Agnes' work was also presentation rather than editing — indeed the two approaches are remarkably parallel, for both saw the Saint as a most admirable and much loved younger sister who had to be protected from a certain exuberance and lack of polish in herself. It was not a question of their finding fault with her but rather of protecting her against being misunderstood.<sup>21</sup>

Thérèse's writing is eager, vivacious, exuberant. It has a certain tone which one might call "excited" except that it is deliberately chosen and completely under control. Msgr. Knox has gently but effectively leveled this tone so that his book ripples along easily and pleasantly. Certain favorite words of the Saint have been "desentimentalised," e.g., *doux* is translated "delightful," *tendresses* becomes "kindness." Sometimes this "toning down" changes the whole sense as when *un torrent de larmes* becomes "the tears came to my eyes," *glorieuse épreuve* becomes "strange affliction" (cf. pp. 72 and 215). The truth is that Thérèse's whole philosophy of life is expressed in the original as it stood: she wept "as she never wept before" when she heard that Celine already pledged to Carmel was to attend a dance party; the *épreuve* in question was her father's illness and it was *glorieuse* both for him, since he had accepted it and for his family who had to suffer with him all the dreadful humiliation attending insanity. Thérèse wrote "glorious trial" very firmly and she meant it. She underlined the word "glorious," and her whole philosophy of suffering is in that underlining.

It will be clear I think that the statement that the Knox version gives us what the Saint *said* must be corrected. I do not know

<sup>21</sup> On the Saint's style, see the remarks of M. Jean Guitton of the French Academy in his excellent little essay, *The Spiritual Genius of St. Thérèse* (translation published by Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1958, 51 pages at £ 2/6<sup>0</sup>): "Thérèse gives a new value to the word. Whatever she says, she does, and her sayings are like oracles. . . . Wherever Thérèse followed the bad taste of her time she alone was not in bad taste: for a style is always good when it is exact and true." This is exactly my own impression: with Thérèse every word is *genuine*, if she uses what has become for others a *cliché* it is for her by no means a *cliché* but something fully meant, felt, and meditated.

whether it is possible to change a writer's style radically without changing the thought also. In any case Thérèse's thought is changed in many places. It is as if the translation missed altogether some of the deeper currents running through the original. I have the impression that in certain places the translator's personal experience is inadequate to the text while in others it is not. Thus the passage on the obscuration of the Saint's faith is very well done, whereas the passage relating the Saint's discovery that her vocation is love is not at all successful. In the passage concerning the new commandment I have the impression that, like Mother Agnes, Msgr. Knox rather misses the point: the Saint's great discovery is rather lost sight of, the discovery that we are asked to love others from out of the Heart of Jesus — indeed the section is headed: "Little Sacrifices of the Cloister."

I hope I am not giving the impression that the Knox version is a failure, or that it distorts the original. No, it is an excellent presentation of the original in the same way as *The Story of a Soul* was an excellent presentation of the original. Mother Agnes' book has done immense good, and Msgr. Knox's translation has already won many new friends for the Saint. It is to be hoped, nevertheless, that somebody will undertake a more pedestrian, more literal translation of the *Manuscripts Autobiographiques*,<sup>22</sup> the kind of translation that Mr. Frank Sheed has given us of the Saint's letters. This will not exclude the Knox version any more than the more recent translations of the Bible have excluded the Knox Bible.

## Conclusion

The heart of St. Thérèse — personality and doctrine both — is the love of Jesus Christ. She is the great expert in what she herself liked to call the "Science of Love." There are so many difficulties and pitfalls along the Way of Love that all but the most courageous are daunted, and all but the wisest in danger of going astray. The soul that keeps to the foothills of the mount of perfection will travel in safe mediocrity to the end: the soul that would scale the heights must face storms and dangerous paths. Certain of the great saints

<sup>22</sup> Cf. "Englishing the Little Flower," *The Furrow*, October, 1958, where I have compared the original with the translation at this point.

have struck out paths to the heights, and many still follow these paths intrepidly. And yet, for some reason, most of us find the old paths not so much difficult as strange and confusing. So did St. Thérèse, and it is her great achievement that she struck out a new path, not a soft or easy one, but one that we can follow, that brings out the best in us and does not ask us to do what is beyond us or strange to us. Every way to God is a Way *toward* Love; St. Thérèse's way is also a Way *of* Love, for it begins with love and advances by growth in love. It is the way for "little souls," for simple, loving hearts, that is for all who would enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Yet it is more truly a way for "great souls," for humility is the foundation of all spiritual greatness, and it is the simple, loving heart that calls down God's mercy and His best graces. It is unfortunate that many are put off by superficial and inaccurate accounts of the Saint's doctrine, as if it were somehow petty or sentimental, a matter of wearing a fixed smile or using baby talk with God. It is by studying the Saint's writings closely that we can pick our way safely among so many misunderstandings. This study is within the reach of all, for St. Thérèse wrote simply and clearly. But her doctrine is profound nevertheless, and those who know it well are always finding new depths in it. Love is the simplest thing in the world, so simple that a child can understand it; yet it is inexhaustible and full of mystery, and ever new. . . .



## BOOK REVIEWS

**MOTHER OF GOD, A Study of Mary in Scripture and Tradition**, by (Father) Cyril Bernard Papali, O.C.D., Macmillan, New York, N. Y., 1957, 174 pp. \$2.50

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This book was reviewed in the May, 1958, issue of *SPIRITUAL LIFE*. But since *Sponsa Regis* (November, 1958) carried a special notice on the same book stating that "this book should not be available to sisters or their students," we feel bound to review it again.

We think SR's advice unfortunate and hereby contradict it.

Mariology, like all theological disciplines, thrives on controversy over its fundamental principle (i.e., either the Divine Maternity alone, or the Divine Maternity together with Mary's Co-redemption) as well as over the elucidations it has offered on the role of Divine Tradition as a font of revelation. However, such controversy, to be fruitful, has to be conducted according to certain theological and logical norms, and one of these is the agreement of the controversialists as to the nature of the science and its sources. Interpretations of the sources and the fundamental principles will necessarily lead to different conclusions, but disagreement on the sources themselves must necessarily lead to controversy which is destructive of real progress.

I find the latter situation is the case regarding one segment of critics of the *Mother of God*, by a Discalced Carmelite Father, Cyril Bernard, a professor at the Gregorian University in Rome. The book itself (not a translation as the critics failed to realize) is a reprint of an earlier work by the name of *Madonna*. It is an attempt at a sound doctrinal foundation for popular devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Two types of critic of the work have been found.

Frank Duff, founder of the Legion of Mary, introduces Father Cyril Bernard's work in glowing terms:

"We must make Mary better understood. That being the peremptory need, it is a joy to find this book of Father Cyril Bernard which is a superb instrument for the purpose. I simply cannot think of a better one. It is a duty to recommend it and get people to read it. It brings all the wonderful doctrine about Mary within our reach and in an intensely readable way."

Another reviewer in *Worship* has this to say:

"In spite of the ecclesiastical *imprimatur*, the book cannot be recommended for general reading. It is seriously defective in historical and theological accuracy. . . . It is not sound in its method. . . . In its defects it demonstrates the advantages, even for devotional works, of the mental discipline of scholastic theology . . ." (Vol. 33, p. 74).

Leaving aside differences in detail between the favorable and adverse criticisms, I find that the key issues on which there is divergence are: (1) Mary's co-redemption; (2) the proper emphases of Scriptural and Traditionary evidences for Mary's Immaculate Conception and Assumption.

Both key issues are the subjects of much sharp discussion among theologians today. Since there is such sharp dis-

agreement on fundamentals, there should be even sharper disagreement on the conclusions drawn therefrom. The Church alone can decide definitively on both issues.

It would seem to this reviewer, however, that she has already decided something on the second of these issues: Tradition is the main support for the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption. Perhaps the words of a modern theologian are apposite:

"The task of rediscovering the true face of our Mother is the work of

the theologian. But it is not exclusively his. For theology at its highest is but a reverent listening to the heartbeat of the Mystical Body . . ." (Thomas Clarke, S.J., *Mary and the Theologians*).

Father Cyril Bernard seems to me a good listener. If his book cannot be recommended to the general public, the same might be said for the Fathers and Popes in whose works the book has its source.

— FATHER DENIS, O.C.D.  
Holy Hill, Wis.

**MEET SAINT TERESA**, by Joseph P. Kelly, Pustet, New York, N. Y., 1958, 212 pp., \$3.95

Teresa of Jesus is a delightful person to know. Her personality charmed the people of her times regardless of their social rank, and it attracts a myriad host of admirers even today in our "modern" era. Teresa is able to draw souls into her Order by the sheer force of her personality; it even has effected the conversion of souls. Almost four centuries have elapsed since the death of Teresa; in that period many books have appeared about her. To this list we can now add this interesting book of Monsignor Kelly.

Why is Mother Teresa so fascinating? It is really very simple. She is both human and humane . . . and with this wealth she has become a saint who never forgot the miseries of nature. Teresa was not always a saint; she lived an ordinary Christian life free of serious sin without worrying herself too much over the serious business of perfection. There are "low" periods in her life and there are "conversions." Teresa's "falls" had a nature of their own, for God had a special design upon this soul. Every "fall" was a turning toward the external, occasioned by dissipation arising from the reading of sentimental novels, from excessive visiting in the convent parlor.

Our Lord desired a recollected, prayerful soul, and He would not allow Teresa to rest until she had entered into the depths of the interior life. Monsignor's study of the Teresian personality has indicated this phase very well.

We are tempted to disagree with the rather severe judgment which Monsignor Kelly passes upon the reaction of the Princess of Eboli and her ladies to Teresa's autobiography. Granted that the princess was a very frivolous woman, one still finds it a little hard to understand how she could read sins of impurity into Teresa's life, as the author claims. Saints are notoriously excessive in their low esteem of themselves. When Teresa calls herself a "sinner" she refers to her low estate in God's eyes based upon her multiple infidelities in adhering to the interior life. If the purity of Teresa's life will impress us after four centuries, how could it fail to impress persons who had daily contact with her?

Teresa had a healthy respect for learned men. In fact, she wanted her daughters to seek learned priests to direct them in the perilous journey to the seventh mansion. Yet, for all her respect of learning, Teresa had a big heart for the

common man. She had a special love for the uneducated shepherdess Anne of St. Bartholomew; she knew how to joke with the strong, rough men who drove her and her daughters to the new foundations in their poor carts. The reviewer does not think, therefore, that Mother Teresa would approve of so many Spanish expressions in a book introducing her to the ordinary American people. With her direct, frank style Teresa would probably have frowned also on the clever turns in English usage which occasionally confuse the reader. For example, the play on the word "cure" (p. 36) and the adjectival phrases of "a Spanish soul, prayerfully afire . . ." and "a North African soul, ardently prayerful . . ." (p. 53).

Granted that the dispute between the Calced and Discalced Fathers is extremely confusing, we fail to see how it can be "boring," especially when we are told that it was "a discussion so uproarious that for many months it held the vast empire of Philip II in breathless expectation" (p. 180). These disputes rooted in the application of the decrees of the Council of Trent to religious life arose frequently and are symptomatic of an era of the history of spirituality. For example, similar troubles were had by the Franciscans, Carthusians, and Mercedarians in Spain (*Regesta Joannis-Bap-*

*tistae Rubei Ravennatis*, pp. 231 and 234).

When Teresa died, there were fifteen convents of friars which could be said to depend upon Teresa for their foundation only *indirectly*. The only one in which she worked directly was Duruelo, but this foundation had been abandoned long before her death. We cannot, therefore, concur with the Monsignor when he states that Teresa "effected the establishment of fourteen monasteries of the Discalced Friars" prior to her death (p. 68).

The rather summary dismissal of the alumbrado error as an "oriental cult of black magic" hardly does it justice (p. 60).

Regardless of these minor defects Monsignor Kelly's book is a faithful presentation of the personality of St. Teresa — his object in writing the book. He has admirably highlighted the chief characteristics of the Saint. Among these, tower the qualities of generosity and gratitude. Her sons and daughters should certainly heed an admonition of their holy Mother Teresa by cherishing a deep sense of gratitude to Monsignor Kelly: "I cannot bear our being ungrateful to anyone who has ever been kind to us. . . ."

— FATHER SEBASTIAN, O.C.D.  
Washington, D. C.

**SAMARIA**, by André Parrot, Philosophical Library, New York, N. Y., 144 pp.

**BABYLON AND THE OLD TESTAMENT**, by André Parrot, Philosophical Library, New York, N. Y., 166 pp.

Samaria, the capital of the Kingdom of Israel, is mentioned 126 times in the Bible; Babylon, the land of the Exile, is mentioned more than 300 times. It is obvious that books throwing more light on these two places are welcomed by all who wish to deepen their understanding of the world of God's chosen people. The author of these small but beauti-

fully illustrated studies is well qualified: he is the curator in chief of the French National Museums, a professor of École du Louvre in Paris, a director of the Mari archaeological expedition. These books, like his other works, are clear and comprehensive; the expert and the beginner will find them interesting and informative.

Two silver talents were all that Omri, King of Israel, needed to buy the hill in the midst of fertile fields and olive orchards where he wished to build the capital of the Northern Kingdom. This was in the ninth century before the birth of Christ and it is the first reference in the Bible to the town that became the boast of its people and is now a heap of ruins. As empires rose and fell, this region alternately met prosperity and adversity: all this is reflected in the archaeological remains painstakingly described and often illustrated in this useful book.

The same commendation may be given to the book which M. Parrot has written about Babylon, the famous Mesopotamian town on the Euphrates, ideally situated on the ancient trade route and main highway connecting the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf. So impor-

tant was once this mighty metropolis that an artist, drawing a map of his world, placed Babylon at the center of the universe. This clay tablet is now in the British Museum and scarcely prepares the modern tourist for the disappointment of finding that Babylon in 1958 is merely a mass of ruins.

M. Parrot tells well the long story of Babylon's rise and fall. History and archaeology illuminate one another in his pages. Scripture, too, is used to tell the story of the town that so impressed the Jewish exiles who must have found it hard to believe the words of Jeremiah, to whose truth this book testifies: "Never again shall man dwell in Babylon; age after age it shall not be rebuilt" (50:39).

—KATHRYN SULLIVAN,  
Manhattanville College of the  
Sacred Heart, Purchase, N. Y.

**A FATHER FABER HERITAGE**, edited with an Introduction by Sister Mary Mercedes, S.N.D. de Namur, Newman, Westminster, Md., 1956, 368 pp., \$4.75

*A Father Faber Heritage* is an anthology of the writings of Frederick William Faber, the famous nineteenth-century convert, Oratorian, and associate of John Henry Newman. The excerpts from his writings comprising this volume vary in length from one to several pages. Sister Mary Mercedes, the editor, tells us in her introduction that she selected them according to the theme, "the necessity of living intimately with Jesus."

Anthologies limp by nature, in this reviewer's opinion, because they are dissections, and to dissect something is to destroy its natural cohesion. But an anthology of the writings of Father Faber suffers less from dividedness than anthologies of most other authors, because the purpose in all his writings is so single. This purpose is none other than "the necessity of living intimately with Jesus." This "necessity" must have been fore-

most in the personal life of Father Faber. No one could write with such tenderness, exactness, and unction about a subject such as, for example, the Blessed Sacrament without having generated a great love for our Lord in His churches by numerous and devout visits to them. But the genius of Father Faber is more than acquired. His vision is unified because he sees all things from God's point of view. And this ability is none other than the infused gift of supernatural wisdom, by which is given to men a certain savoring of God, and of all things as from God and leading to God.

But God, for Faber, was not limited to the confines of the sanctuary. God was coextensive with truth, and truth, as that educated Anglo-Saxon conceived it, was coextensive with reality. There was no realm of reality which didn't come under the scrutiny of this great



mind. The tree outside his window could teach volumes. The latest discoveries of science were integrated into his vision. Faber was aware of the deceptions of creatures, but he found in them most of all encouragement and inspiration. As a convert he had paid too great a price for the Truth not to be confident when handling it. As a priest he lived too intensely not to desire others to see it.

That others did see Faber's point is borne out by the popularity which his

writings still enjoy, almost a century after he wrote them. Recognized as a master of the spiritual life the world over, his writings have undergone numerous translations. But I fancy that we English-speaking people are more privileged to be able to read Faber in the language he wrote. Here is a man whose mind encompassed worlds, speaking to us in our own terms.

—FATHER IGNATIUS, O.C.D.  
Brookline, Mass.

**CONTEMPORARY MORAL THEOLOGY**, by John C. Ford, S.J., and Gerald Kelly, S.J., The Newman Press, Westminster, Md., 1958, 368 pp., \$4.50

There is often a degree of dissatisfaction with many of the manuals of moral theology. Many priests are aware of this experience. Their dissatisfaction stems not so much from being opposed to what these books contain, for they know how careful bishops are in giving their *imprimatur* to books that can serve as textbooks in training future priests; their dismay is much deeper and is occasioned rather by what these books do *not* say.

There are so many questions that are only lightly touched on; always so many points that one would like to see more fully developed. A few more lines here and there would be so tremendously helpful. But obviously manuals are only handbooks and hence it is not always possible for authors to expand on every problem to the satisfaction of every reader.

Because of the questions that are raised but not solved, and because of the problems that are not given the attention desired, some priests are led to question the value of such manuals in general. They have the feeling that somehow moral theology should be completely revised; that it is behind the times and hence unsuitable to our age; that what we need is a new type of moral theology.

Moral theologians in general and Fathers Ford and Kelly in particular are not unaware of these problems that are plaguing priests and seminarians. They do not feel that moral theology should be completely changed or revised; but they do feel that, for the benefit of priests and seminarians, the research of moral theologians around the world and particularly the recent pronouncements of the Magisterium should be integrated and woven into a modern, up-to-date course of this branch of sacred learning.

They have not written the textbook we are seeking; but they have rendered an invaluable service to the American clergy in this first of a projected three-volume series, entitled *Contemporary Moral Theology*. This book is truly one of the outstanding contributions to moral theology that has ever been written and published in the United States. What makes this book so outstanding, and indispensable, for all who are interested in moral theology, is that it provides answers to many of the questions that are generally left unsolved by manuals. Truly this book begins where ordinary manuals leave off.

The first three chapters are devoted to the responsibility of the Church in regard to Revelation. Christ entrusted

revelation to the Church and commanded the Church to teach and interpret revelation. Since moral theology is not the same as moral philosophy or ethics in that it is revealed, the Church has the obligation of preserving the purity and integrity of this science for all. This she does through the Magisterium of the Supreme Pontiff and of the bishops. The chapters devoted to the value of papal pronouncements on moral matters as well to the value of episcopal decrees, so often minimized, are especially enlightening.

The chapters devoted to the criticisms of moral theology and of the new approaches of modern moralists, crystallize the doubts and misgivings of many and, what is even more important, put them in their proper perspective. They distinguish what is good in these tendencies from what is harmful, what is truly helpful to moral theology from what is not in line with the teachings of the Holy See.

"Situation Ethics," a natural by-product of Existentialism, is a subject that is frequently discussed these days. It is not possible for priests actively engaged in the salvation of souls to keep abreast of all that is being written on this important topic. The attitude of the Holy See and the principal reasons underlying its condemnation of "Situation Ethics" are brought out in two chapters that should be timely for all priests.

In the last analysis, every moral case must be decided on the basis of freedom and imputability in the individual. Have the findings of modern psychology and psychiatry on this important subject made obsolete these sections of our moral theology manuals? The chapters

dealing with these fundamental principles of moral theology should prove to be the most enlightening of the whole book. While they conclude that the insights of modern psychology and psychiatry are very helpful and valuable, they point out how priests can remain within theological bounds and still be justified in judging certain cases more leniently than moralists of the past. These chapters will probably be the ones most appreciated by all.

Unless properly illustrated, principles are not always properly understood and appreciated. Fathers Ford and Kelly have been judicious in illustrating their principles with problems that confront all priests. Dancing, company-keeping, and alcoholism are used as examples of their principles to bring out the dangers of occasions of sin as well as the dimensions of human responsibility and freedom.

Some are too prone to condemn psychiatry while others are inclined to accept its findings without questioning them. The one tendency can be as harmful as the other. What value modern psychiatry can bring to moral theology—the attitude of the Holy See on psychiatry—is studied in the last chapter. The authors show that there is no fundamental opposition or necessary hostility between psychiatry and the Church.

In conclusion, this book should be read by every priest and seminarian. I think I can say, without fear of contradiction, that the priests and seminarians of America will ever be indebted to Fathers Ford and Kelly for this most helpful and enlightening book.

—FATHER MICHAEL, O.C.D.  
Milwaukee, Wis.

**THE SUNDAY SERMONS OF THE GREAT FATHERS:** Patristic Homilies on the Gospels, translated and edited by M. F. Toal, D.D., Henry Regnery Co., Chicago, Ill., Vol. I, 436 pp. (Advent to Quinquagesima); Vol. II, 469 pp. (Lent to the Ascension); Deluxe Edition, \$7.50 per vol., Hand Edition, \$4.50

Too few are the priests who realize the abundant mines of popular sermon material contained in the sermons and commentaries of the Fathers on Sacred Scripture. Though all Catholics cannot possibly read the *Summas* with profit, it is required by Canon Law that the people hear the essence of the Gospel and its explanation from our pulpits each Sunday. Indeed, the best praise that can be offered to Father Toal's four volumes, two of which are in preparation, is that they are completely in line with the source matter required by Canon 1347. This Canon requires that priests deliver the principal truths of faith and morals, avoiding abstruse and secular subjects, but preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified, in spirit and in power.

We Americans, priests and people, desire greater and greater *practicality* in our Sunday sermons; but let us never forget that morality flows from the

truths of the Gospel, and that works without faith are just as useless as faith without works: hence the importance of a knowledge of the best sources of the Faith in all its purity.

Of all sermon books I have seen, none, except perhaps those of the Curé of Ars, combine so well the three characteristics of the good Sunday sermon underlined by the Third Council of Baltimore: *doctrinal purity*—a quality in which the Fathers have no peer; an *understandability* adapted to the capacity of the congregation; *brevity*—here some of the Fathers leave something to be desired; but the Council of Baltimore considers a 15-minute sermon brief!

The people have good reason to ask for a well-prepared sermon each Sunday, and this set of sourcebooks is an ideal tool. If we priests don't take advantage of Father Toal's work, I am afraid that a lot of Protestant ministers will.

—FATHER DENIS, O.C.D.

**WHAT IS A SAINT?**, by Jacques Douillet, Hawthorn Books, New York, N. Y., 1958, 124 pp., \$2.95

Saints, like everything else worthwhile, can easily be taken for granted. But God's choice friends and mankind's greatest heroes should not be taken for granted. That's why it's good to have a book like *What Is a Saint?* This is one of the volumes of the *Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, an ambitious project which will eventually comprise 150 volumes.

We all know what a saint is, but what is it that makes a human being like ourselves a saint of God? That's far more difficult to answer. In the present volume, Father Douillet handles the matter

very deftly, as he examines thoroughly and skillfully the constituents of sanctity. First of all, he investigates the concept of holiness in the Old Testament. Then he shows how that concept was enlarged and deepened by the teaching and example of Christ so that holiness now means loving as Jesus loved. Those who do that are saints.

In order that this concept of sanctity be seen in action the author gives us some thumbnail sketches of a few outstanding saints. Particularly striking here is the account given of St. Perpetua and St. Felicity. The glory and attractiveness

of sanctity shine through this simple account with stunning brightness.

Finally the author considers such things as: genius and sanctity, the process of canonization, relics, miracles attributed to the saints. In these and other matters he gives us solid, scholarly material presented in an attractive

fashion. However, one must admit that the style is at times a bit uneven.

All in all, this is a highly recommended travelogue for all those interested in that exciting trip to saint-land.

— FATHER PATRICK M.  
McNAMARA, O.S.M.  
Milwaukee, Wis.

**THE LORD IS NEAR**, by Monsignor Richaud; translated by Ronald Matthews, The Newman Press, Westminster, Md., 1958, 48 pp., paper, 90 cents (Doctrine and Life Series)

**OUR LADY IN HUMAN LIFE**, by Paul Doncoeur; translated by Michael Day, Cong. Orat., The Newman Press, Westminster, Md., 1958, 43 pp., paper, 90 cents (Doctrine and Life Series)

**PRAYER AND THE PRESENT MOMENT**, by Michael Day, Cong. Orat., The Newman Press, Westminster, Md., 1958, 48 pp., paper, 90 cents (Doctrine and Life Series)

**THE CHRISTIAN MEANING OF HOPE**, by Abbé Roger Hasseveldt, The Newman Press, Westminster, Md., 1958, 46 pp., paper, 90 cents (Doctrine and Life Series)

The name of this publishing series defines its scope: the substance of each booklet is doctrine, and each is intended to make application of its doctrine to life in our post-World War II generation. They are not all equally successful. In each case footnotes and references are drawn from original sources mainly, i.e., the Old Testament, the Gospels, the Epistles, the Liturgy, the *Summa*. There is no redundancy, rather indeed one is conscious of simplicity and a morning freshness. Each booklet is an experience in spiritual joy, and each seems all too brief. One might even liken them to vitamin pills: those pills are very small things, but the vitamins they contain have the strength of life in them.

In view of the present security status of Americans past 65, and increased life-expectancy statistics, Monsignor Richaud's *The Lord Is Near* would seem to serve a widespread need. "Those who are getting on in life . . .," he says, "are nearer to God who is waiting for them.

. . . It is for them to respond." He then outlines practical applications to present-day problems of the aged, and guidance to make the declining years what "The Lord wants . . . a period of moral and spiritual ascent." A book for the many. The translation could hardly be better.

\* \* \*

Paul Doncoeur says, "We must approach this subject [our Lady] in a direct manner . . . to cover the warp and woof of our actual lives as men in the world of today . . . so that we may come up against the problems of here and now." He develops his argument on aesthetic, sentimental, and theological bases, distinguishing each with the succinct brilliance of French classic style. However the handbook is actually a formal essay and does not have the direct approach to everyday lives nor specific application to specific problems of here and now except in a subjective sense, beautifully written and devotional though it is. The translation is superb.

\* \* \*



A treatise on St. Therese of Lisieux is the third offering of this Doctrine and Life Series. The thought occurs that perhaps it originally was an address or a conference to religious. The introduction states: "Parts I and II are practical considerations on prayer and activity." Therefore the lay person seeking help everywhere he can find it in his effort to achieve a balance between prayer and his daily activities should be warned that the activity mentioned is an intense subjective activity chiefly concerned with effort to attain true humility of soul, and the specific difficulties of this subjective activity are anonymously veiled as "The conflict between what is and what should be, a disharmony which is the constitutive principle of our suffering" (p. 11). It seems safe to state that there are no new interpretations of the spirituality of St. Therese here. But Father Day writes in a delightful style, his considerations are beautifully phrased and pointed, and one might well read this booklet for the love of our Lord it engenders and the inspiration with which it strongly uplifts the soul.

Some years ago, in 1951 to be exact, Jean Danielou wrote a theological development of "Christian Faith in a City of God." His book, *Advent*, thus complements Abbé Hasseveldt's message. "It would probably surprise many of the faithful," writes the Abbé, "to learn that the first object of the hope of the Church is the second coming of Christ." Danielou wrote with the urgency upon him of furthering the salvation of all nations against the second coming of Christ. The Abbé, however, writes out of a compassion for the failure of the faithful to realize in the words of Montcheuil: "We have made of the end

of the world a thing of terror, conjuring up nothing but catastrophe. We must see in it also, indeed above all, the coming of Christ in His glory for the final judgment, the completion of the history of mankind, to inaugurate a new heaven and a new earth."

With atomic destruction of the world an ever present speculation, the virtue of hope reveals dimensions and implications beyond all most of us ever dreamed. "The soul was made to live in the body but also man was made to live in the universe" (p. 30). Christian hope therefore must include not merely concern for our souls but "the life of the world to come which will take the place of the life of this world"; in Christ glorified and in our glorified bodies, and in a renewed creation which will be "not merely survival of the soul, but a life truly total and complete with every human dimension" (p. 24) (*italics mine*). Abbé Hasseveldt writes of our task on earth in the light of this Christian meaning of hope; that it "brings us to the problem of humanism and renunciation." His discussion of this soars into a mighty challenge with emphasis on the Christian obligation to effect a Christian world order. Inevitably these 46 pages leave the serious reader eager to follow the avenues of thought the Abbé's presentation of Christian hope opens up. Jean Danielou's *Advent* should help satisfy this desire, Danielou's extensive theological clarification being very rich in illustrative detail from prophetic history. The three final chapters of Abbé Hasseveldt's book contain some burning problems. The emphasis might even be considered a bit too sweeping, yet in our moment of history who can say?

—MARY KIELY  
Providence, R. I.

**THE SILENCE OF ST. THOMAS**, by Josef Pieper; translated from the German by John Murray, S.J., and Daniel O'Connor; Pantheon, N. Y., 1957, 122 pp., \$2.75

Another work *about* St. Thomas Aquinas has appeared in English, a translation of the *Ueber Thomas von Aquin Philosophia Negativa* by the German philosopher, Prof. Josef Pieper. It includes three essays, one on the life-work and personality of St. Thomas, a second on the element of "mystery" found in his works, a third on the timelessness of Thomism, in relation to modern existentialism and its companion, a mistrust of systematic (and Scholastic) philosophy.

Strangely enough, the book is dominated by the attitude of the last few months of the saint's life, when he was asked why he did not continue the third part of the *Summa Theologica*, and his answer was: "All that I have written seems to me nothing but straw . . . compared to what I have seen and what has been revealed to me" (p. 40). Being, it is true, is not only intelligible, but also an intelligible mystery — *completely* intelligible to God alone. Moreover, it certainly is good to underscore the fundamental thesis of the author: "*Human knowledge is at the same time true and not fully sufficient*" (p. 108). Or perhaps, as Cardinal St. Robert Bellarmine put it, "Philosophy asks the questions, theology gives the answers." For this reason, the author says, the silence of St. Thomas Aquinas is "the silence of reverence . . . not the silence of resignation and still less of despair" (p. 110).

Yet I think a distinction should be made here, as the author has called for criticism and debate of his fundamental thesis: it centers around the word "sufficient." It is certainly true that human reason is insufficient to attain divine mystery: that is the very meaning of *supernatural* mystery. It is also true that human nature, without divine grace, is insufficient to fulfill the commandments

of the natural law and of the divine positive law (i.e., the commandments of charity, and the ten commandments). But is reason insufficient to know the *existence* of the mystery of God, the mystery of the soul, the *existence* of the divine deeds such as miracles and prophecies which are guideposts on the road to a knowledge of the mysteries of faith? Of course not. Prof. Pieper would certainly agree to this; and if this fact is agreed, I do not think that he can conclude that our philosophical manuals and textbooks "present the danger . . . not of denying, but of veiling the inadequacy of our knowledge" (p. 109).

This is not to say that philosophical pedagogy is perfect, nor that we have the perfect manual of philosophy. But my very reverence for the mystery of being, created and uncreated, tells me that St. Thomas Aquinas, particularly in his *Commentaries on Aristotle*, but also in his *Summas* has given us a set of manuals which not only solve the problems of human knowledge, but also do so without "veiling the inadequacy of our knowledge."

But when we have said this about St. Thomas, we must still agree with the professor that what *Thomas* teaches is not always what *Thomists* teach. Perhaps in our search for the American Catholic synthesis we should ask ourselves less, "What do Thomists teach today?" than "What would St. Thomas teach today if he were an American Catholic philosophy professor?"

The answer to this question will be found, not in the silence of St. Thomas, but in his written word — and especially in his work of synthesizing the best of pagan thought with Christian tradition.

— FATHER DENIS, O.C.D.  
Holy Hill, Wis.



**THE ART OF TEACHING CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE**, by Johannes Hofinger, S.J., University of Notre Dame Press, 278 pp., \$3.95

**New Catechisms:**

**LIFE IN CHRIST**, by Reverends James Killgallon and Gerard Weber (Life in Christ: 720 N. Rush St., Chicago 11, Ill.), 286 pp., paper, \$1.00 (less for orders of 10 or more copies)

**A CATHOLIC CATECHISM**, Herder and Herder, N. Y., 448 pp., \$2.00

**ON OUR WAY SERIES**, Sisters Maria de Pa Cruz, H.H.S., and Mary Richard, H.H.S., W. H. Sadlier, N. Y. Ready now — Grade I, **WITH CHRIST TO THE FATHER**; teacher's manual, \$1.00; pupil's workbooks, 50 cents each

The "art" which Father Hofinger aims for in the teaching of Christian doctrine is the art of presenting the essentials of our Faith; of teaching the fundamentals, the glad tidings of Jesus Christ." The Catholic Church has a rich heritage in depth and in scope. Sometimes those who would understand its truth can be sidetracked by less essential truths. They can lose sight of the central experience of participating in the life of Christ, and thereby in the life of the Most Holy Trinity. Father Hofinger emphasizes, over and over again, our need to know that it is through Christ that we go to the Father. "Christ is the Way, the Father is the Goal."

Father Hofinger uses the Greek word *erygma* (as did Father Joseph Jungmann before him) to refer to "the core" of the Christian message, to that which is most essential. Both of these Jesuit priests, Jungmann, the famous liturgist, and Hofinger, his disciple, now a missionary in the Philippines, are impressed with the particular need of our times to have the "bedrock" of Christian truth presented, the central Gospel proclamation.

Today, "even in so-called Catholic countries, the Christian religion itself is in danger among the masses of the people; no longer is one or other doctrine questioned, but Christianity as a whole." Therefore it is urged that "the

inner nature and worth of Christianity" be emphasized.

The catechetical task is: "To proclaim Christ. For Christ, the great gift of the Father's love and our way to the Father is Himself the central theme of our message, just as participation in Christ's life is the proper goal of our apostolate."

"Personal contact" with Sacred Scriptures (the word of God) and the Liturgy (the life of Christ given to us in the Mass and the Sacraments) is the background necessary for teachers of Christian doctrine. The Bible and the Liturgy are "the living sources of Christian vitality, the great means Christ gives us in the Church for growth in His life and union with Him." They provide the spiritual nourishment needed by both teacher and student.

The general thesis of the book is applicable to everyone interested in entering fully into the Christian life. Its purpose is to reveal the basic truths. There are special chapters on the training and catechetical apostolates of lay teachers, Sisters, and priests. The content of the message is treated rather than methods. It is taken for granted that catechists will avoid abstract teaching, divorced from the realities of daily life, and mechanical memorizing of little understood texts. The book contains many specific and useful suggestions.

## NEW CATECHISMS:

A fresh approach to catechetical teaching is shown in several new catechisms. There is evidence that essential doctrines are being given proper place, and that the Bible and the Liturgy are presented as the sources for growth in the spiritual life.

One of these catechisms, *Life in Christ*, was planned for adults seeking instruction. It contains many well-chosen quotations from the Bible. It aims to familiarize those who study it with Holy Scripture and to draw them into the prayer life of the Church. Excellent bibliographies for further study are included.

A *Catholic Catechism* is a translation of the new catechism now officially adopted in all the dioceses of Germany. This English version has been enthusiastically welcomed and seems destined to be widely used. It is a summary of the teaching of the Church for children,

but also for the family, maturely portrayed. It is neither a pupil's workbook nor a teacher's aidbook; rather a background book, valuable for the Catholic family to own and use reverently in studying the "Joyful News of God's Kingdom."

The *On Our Way Series* is so new that only the material for first-grade children is ready. Second-grade books are due for publication this winter. This series offers workbooks for children and a comprehensive teacher's guide for each grade. Father Hofinger assisted the authors in planning the doctrinal outlines. The illustrations are appealing without being sentimental. The content is doctrinally sound but presented suitably for the age group. Christian doctrine is viewed, not in incoherent fragments, but as a unity, the divine message of the Good News.

—MARGARET GARDNER  
Norwich, Vermont

## NOTICE!

Reprints available —

## 1) Truth and Human Fellowship

by Jacques Maritain

## 2) A Complete, Annotated Bibliography on Christian Humanism

by Paul B. Steinmetz, S.J.

Address: 1233 So. 45th St., Milwaukee 14, Wis.

Rates: 15 copies, \$1.00	50 copies, \$2.50
100 copies, \$4.00	500 copies, \$15.00
	Single copy, 10¢

Old issues requested —

We have exhausted our supply of two issues and are thus unable to supply libraries with complete volumes. We wonder if any of our readers can send us: Vol. 1, No. 2 and Vol. 1, No. 3.